

Negotiating Culture

**The Discourse of Art and the Position of the Artist in
1980s China**

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis deals with fine art in China in the eighties. It aims to set out the problems and choices artists faced in creation, by examining the artist's self-positioning in regard to the current discourse of art. This was the decade of the Four Modernisations and the "emancipation of thought", a period of intense social and cultural change. As the Party sought to steer a path away from the ideology of the Cultural Revolution, a greater cultural pragmatism emerged, and the question of what was to be the future of Chinese art and culture became hot topics of debate. The various clashes of narratives - between history and art, East and West, tradition and modernisation, the individual, the region and the nation/state - made up a rich and diverse range of opinions as to the current situation, the role and value of art in China.

The thesis examines the eighties both in terms of art works and in terms of opinions that were expressed about art. The decade began with the idea that "theory guides practice" and this was reflected in the many official conferences that took place. However, by the mid-eighties, practice was setting the agenda, and art works could no longer easily be contained within the existing theoretical framework. We examine how the debate unfolded in the main periodicals in the eighties, how artists positioned themselves in relation to this discourse, how their work questioned existing theoretical frameworks and notions of art history.

The very different life experience (and political outlook) of the successive generations of artists in China had a huge influence on their view of life and art. In order to give as broad a perspective as possible of this diversity artists and artworks have been selected according to different combinations of the following criteria: temporal location: age and education (which "generation" they belong to); Location within culture (what media/tradition they work in); and location within the discourse of "national identity" (whether they are in the centre or periphery, Han or ethnic minorities).

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Preliminary Notes

Romanisation. Pin Yin romanisation has been used throughout the thesis. Exceptions have been made for names (e.g. Sun Yatsen) who are already well known in older versions and in the titles of articles which used the older Wade-Giles system.

Chinese characters for articles appear in the bibliography; for artists in Appendix III; for titles of artworks, in the list of illustrations.

Chinese terms. I have deliberately left a number of Chinese terms untranslated where I felt there was no Western equivalent. *Guohua* is a neologism meaning "national painting" and refers specifically to the traditional ink-wash painting, as opposed to oil painting which was first known as *xiyang hua* (Western painting). *Shanshui* is a subcategory of *guohua* sometimes translated as "landscape" painting. *Xieyi* is a painting technique sometimes translated as "idea writing" (Andrews) or as "sketching the idea of things" (Bush). It aims to capture the essence of the subject rather than a formal resemblance. This however does not do full justice to the term which literally means "mountains and water". A *Huayuan* is a government-sponsored institute that employs artists solely for the purpose of creation.

Abbreviations: Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing (CAFA); Zhejiang Academy of Fine Art, Hangzhou (ZAFA) - renamed the National Academy of Fine Art in 1994; Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, Beijing (CAAC); Beijing Oil Painting Research Association (BOPRA); National Art Exhibition (NAE); Advancing Young Chinese Artists Exhibition (AYCA).

Short **Biographies** in Appendix III have been arranged according to artists' date of birth. This can be found where the artist is first mentioned in the main text. An **Index** of artists has been appended for ease of reference.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The eighties in China was a decade of contradictions: it was both a period of cultural crisis and one of intense cultural energy and production. Deng's rise to power brought a shift in the priorities of the Mao era. Class struggle was de-emphasised in favour of more pragmatic policies. The 3rd Plenum of the 11th CCP in 1979 was a turning point when the Four Modernisations and Open Door Policies were approved, and China, which had previously been isolated from the world, re-entered the world stage. Deng's reforms brought about a sudden growth of the economy and an increase in wealth. This was counterbalanced by the problems that accompany a free market economy, which were exacerbated by growing information about the West which flooded the country with new ideas and raised people's expectations. The liberalisation brought about by the call for the "emancipation of thought" allowed for an openness of debate unprecedented in the history of the PRC. This was kept in check by two campaigns in 1983 and 1987, and eventually resulted in a showdown on June the Fourth 1989.

The decade was also an eventful one for the fine arts. The art world blossomed in the spring of 1979 when artists who had gone underground (and art styles which had been banned) during the Mao era resurfaced. All of a sudden, traditional style *guohua* emerged alongside the "new" *guohua*, and modern style oil painting appeared beside socialist realism. The diversification of styles continued until it reached a peak in the 1985-86 New Wave art movement. This was a nationwide movement with tremendous energy which attracted the majority of young artists and which eventually attempted to assert its position as the mainstream of Chinese art in the 1989 China Avant-Garde Exhibition.

This thesis gives an account of Chinese art in the eighties. The art of this period exhibited an extraordinary diversity. This potential "pluralism" gave rise to many disputes and controversies that originated from the very different ideas and philosophies of life of artists working in different traditions. This thesis looks not only at the relation between art and politics but more importantly at various questions of cultural identity that came to the

fore in the eighties. In particular it focuses on cultural choices artists faced. These were far from simple choices between East/West, tradition/modernisation and so on: they involved a re-examination of the artists' cultural identities, a critique of history and art, and a search for meaning in their work as individuals and as agents of local, national and global culture.

Perhaps the main contention of the decade was whether "new wave" art should be recognised, and, if so, what value it had. The main accusation levelled against it was that it was not "Chinese", but merely a "copy of the West". This was part of a greater fear of wholesale Westernisation. As China became increasingly modernised, aspects of its unique culture, from palpable things such as architecture, to less definable things such as thought and lifestyle, were quickly disappearing. On the whole these changes seemed to be taken as inevitable, yet there was a strong feeling that art should - for some reason - be free of non-Chinese influences. The accusations that "new wave" art was merely a copy of Western trends might seem justified at first glance, but the reality is much more complex. It must be seen not just in the context of evolution of style, but in the context of the long struggle for democracy and pluralism. To understand its importance one cannot limit oneself to looking at art and the discourse of art in the 1980s: one must also be aware of developments in Chinese art and culture through the twentieth century

1.1 The Narratives of "History" and "Art" in China

The clash between China and the West in the early twentieth century forced China out of its cultural isolation. Although the implications of this have been widely written about in most academic fields, the sheer scope of this change in the realm of art has never been fully explored. In order to compete in the world, Chinese people felt compelled to learn from the West. The result of this was the 1919 "May the Fourth Movement", with its slogans of "science and democracy".¹ Yet underlying this change, and fundamental to it, was a greater

¹This movement which lasted from 1917 to 1921 saw the increasing involvement of intellectuals in seeking to better the situation of China. The name May the Fourth itself refers to the student demonstrations that took place in Beijing to protest against the handing over of Shandong province to the Japanese at the Versailles

transformation of cultural mentality, an important element of which was a growing historical consciousness. This meant a change in historical perception, replacing the idea of history as cyclical, or as having its ideal golden age in the past², with the idea that each period of history shows a higher form of development than the preceding one.³

This idea of "progress" was bound to have a great impact on art. The idea of "change" had always been present in Chinese art history, but it was never linked to an idea of systematic progress. Throughout history, the ideal of art - like the ideal age - lay in the past, not the future. The growth of this idea of historical progress enclosed Chinese art in a new framework, and it was seen from a new angle. Firstly there arose a notion of Chinese art and culture being at odds with, and not belonging to, the current "epoch" of history, and secondly an idea that it had to be brought "up to date" with the modern world and with the new ideas coming from the West. This in turn gave rise to new values and concepts for evaluating art that, needless to say, were quite different from traditional connoisseurship.

Much of this idea of history as progress was defined in terms of science. Social evolutionism was accepted as an explanation for the rise of European nations, and the ability to think scientifically was seen as the key quality which gave them the edge over other nations. The exaggerated belief in the possibilities of science in China at the time has been described as "scientism": "a tendency to use the respectability of science in areas having little bearing on science itself".⁴ Art was not immune to this trend. For example, Cai

Peace Conference in 1919. See Chow Tse-Tsung, *The May the Fourth Movement, Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Hong Kong University Press 1992.

² For a brief account of Chinese cyclical views of history see Smith, Richard, J. *China's Cultural Heritage. The Ch'ing Dynasty 1644-1912* Westview Press, Colorado 1983:104.

³ Such efforts saw a change from accepting the mythical beginnings of Chinese civilization, to adopting more universal and scientifically justified narratives. One early essay which is of importance in this field is Cai Yuanpei's "The Evolution of Art" *Beijing Daxue Rikan* no.807, 15 February 1921. Cai Yuanpei traces the beginning of all art forms to primitive dance, from which they gain their independence through successive steps. At the most developed end of the scale he contrasts Chinese and Western painting, saying that the former is the most developed, but that it lacks creativity, whereas the latter often establish new schools and are more advanced in painting atmosphere, light, spatial relations and the special features of figures. Finally, he observes the evolution of all art forms as tending from the simple to the complex, from attachment to independence, from the individual to the common. He further notes that Chinese people's fondness of collecting, but reluctance to pool resources in order to set up museums does not conform with the general law of evolution. For an account of the change in historical view in Western thought, see Bury, J.B. *The Idea of Progress* Dover Press 1932, 1987.

⁴ Kwok, D.W.Y *Scientism in Chinese Thought 1900-1950* Yale University Press 1965:3

Yuanpei (1867-1940), the leading educator of early republican China, once stated that "the good point of Europeanization is that everything takes science as its foundation: the improvement of life; the reform of society; even the creation of art. They all progress along with the progress of science."⁵

The idea of historical progress and of the benefits of science were not universally accepted. After the first world war, there were grave doubts about the direction of China's development, and several arguments were put forward in favour of Chinese morality as a stabilising and positive element for the future world. This culminated in the great 1923 philosophical debate "Science versus Metaphysics" which was couched in terms of the spiritual civilisation of the East confronting the material civilisation of the West, and was essentially a debate about whether science could supply China with a new philosophy of life.⁶ The conclusion of this argument favoured the scientists, and so Chinese artists gradually began to adopt a Western-influenced historical framework to explain "change".

By the early forties, the idea of art progressing with "science", "history" or "evolution" seemed to be quite widely accepted, and was already being formulated in the most explicit terms. One year after the "Yan'an Forum", the woodcut artist Li Hua (b.1907), at the time based in Guilin (South China), wrote a book attempting to set a new historical framework and theoretical basis for art in China, in which he wrote:

We maintain: art is the ideology of the upper strata of social development, its existence is determined by society's economic base. When a change occurs in the production relation (生产关系) which acts as the economic base of society, art also changes with it, at this point art thought currents (艺术思潮) then come into being. Society's development evolves according to the dialectical laws of history, from the two forces of "correct" (正) and "reactionary" (反) the continuously growing and declining in opposition [to each other]. Then, art thought currents which evolve along with the development of society are similarly continuously evolving according to the growth and decline of these two forces, whose main forces are "realism" and "anti-realism". On the whole, "the main current of realism" represents the "correct" social force, meaning it is revolutionary, progressive and burgeoning; the "main

5 Andrews, Julia F. *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China 1949 -1979* University of California Press 1994:12

⁶ Kwok 1965: Chapter 6.

current of anti-realism" represents the "reactionary" force, meaning it is counter-revolutionary, retrogressive and conservative. These two main currents as they emerge in art thought, run through every epoch, following each other just like a merry-go-round [literally: the shadows of paper cut figures on a revolving lantern]. However, their development is not just repetitive and cyclical (like a merry-go-round), but is an ascending evolution...Realism of the later age is a higher and more progressive development than the realism of the previous age. As to future realism, we also have the same view, even to infinity.⁷

Li Hua's primary concern was still with the development of art itself, and although he saw this development as being influenced by social and economic forces, his concept of "realism" remained quite open and autonomous. By contrast, in the Yan'an Talks, Mao Zedong reduced art to a class phenomenon, "cogs and wheels" in the machine of the proletarian revolutionary cause.⁸ As such its laws of development were to be narrowly tied to class ideals, with no autonomy beyond this function.

Chinese communist theories of social change were based on what Karl Popper has called Marx's method of "economic historicism":

According to Marx, every particular social system must destroy itself, simply because it must create the forces which produce the next historical period. A sufficiently penetrating analysis of the feudal system, undertaken shortly before the industrial revolution, might have led to the detection of the forces which were about to destroy feudalism, and to the prediction of the most important characteristics of the coming period, capitalism. Similarly, an analysis of the development of capitalism might enable us to detect the forces which work for its destruction, and to predict the most important characteristics of the new historical period which lies ahead of us.⁹

From this basis, there arose the possibility of equating the laws of history with those of the natural sciences, and of then being able to foretell the future, to believe in the coming of a socialist society as the next "inevitable" stage, and to bring it about through revolution.

⁷ Li Hua *New Art Theory* Guilin 1943:2 to 3

⁸ Mao Zedong "Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol III*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1977:86.

⁹ Popper, Karl R. *The Open Society and its Enemies* 1945:135

In the words of Li Dazhao (1889-1927)¹⁰, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party:

Scientific socialism has taken as its basis the materialist conception of history, and by investigating the process of human historical development, it has discovered the necessary laws of history. On the basis of these laws it has advocated the social necessity of socialism. From this it can be said that a socialist society, no matter whether men want it or not [...] is a command of history.¹¹

This ideology was extremely powerful. In 1917 the Russian revolution seemed to be the first major step in its realisation. By the end of the Second World War the whole world became divided into huge opposite and competing camps, one following the capitalist system, the other following the socialist system. In 1949 the Communists in China finally won the civil war against the Nationalists and established a socialist state.

After this "liberation", the communist ideology advocated by Mao was thrown with great energy into the almost futurist project of building a socialist utopia. Confidence in the scientific and political basis of Mao's "future-building" project seems to have been little questioned to begin with. Indeed, the stakes were raised higher during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1959), an awesome campaign to increase production by mobilising the willpower of the people with an aim to "overtake Great Britain [in steel production] in fifteen years". During this period, the measures applied to agricultural and industrial production were also applied to artistic production. Workers and peasants were encouraged to produce art works and art workers to fulfil production quotas. This belief in the revolutionary willpower of the masses took on a new form of vanguardism in the Cultural Revolution when propaganda claimed China was at the forefront of a global revolution. While avant-garde movements in the West were in full swing, Mao's wife Jiang Qing (b.1913) proposed an

¹⁰ Li Dazhao was also librarian and professor at Beijing University and strongly influenced the youth of China at the time of the May the Fourth Movement. He was principal organiser of the Communist organisational and propaganda activities in North China until 1927, when the warlord Zhang Zuolin had him arrested and executed, [Boorman Vol II:329]

¹¹ Li Dazhao "The Historical View of Saint-Simon" See Maurice Meisner "Li Ta-chao and the Chinese Communist Treatment of the Materialist Conception of History. In Feuerwerker 1968:289.

alternative brand of vanguardism: "We too should create what is new and original, new in the sense that it is socialist and original in the sense that it is proletarian".¹²

The failure of communism in overtaking the West and securing a place at the vanguard of history/progress spelt an end to an art history that tied art to political progress. The collapse of their ideology left Chinese artists in a very awkward situation. It was not only a crisis of faith in the Party, but also a loss of identity - during those ten years China's culture was thrown into turmoil: artists were persecuted, pictures burnt and monuments destroyed. In an attempt to reach for the future, the "old" culture whose pernicious influence was seen to be holding society back was destroyed. Now, it felt as if not only the future but the past had been destroyed.

With their own ideology of progress shattered, and their country isolated from the world for so many years, artists were left in an ideological vacuum. The articles of this time clearly reflect this crisis of confidence, but are permeated with historicist ideas that were sought in order to supply different theoretical answers about the future "development" of Chinese art. These ideas were not merely being voiced by official theorists: they were a preoccupation of artists who were steeped in the ideology of vanguardism. In such a situation many artists began to find the developments of modern art in the capitalist Western world the most progressive choice, and then started consciously absorbing, copying and assimilating it.

The unique nature of this situation makes it particularly interesting - not just in terms of the political situation of art and China's long cultural isolation but also with regard to this "ideological vacuum". China's artists found themselves situated thirty years behind in a narrative of Universal/Western art developments. It seemed as though the path of their future development (and the theoretical moves and structure supporting such moves) was already fully developed and they were left with the thankless and inglorious task of what detractors would claim to be merely "copying from the West".

There are, however, important reasons why one should not accept this view as final. Firstly, the motives of those making such dismissive statements are of the utmost importance,

¹² "Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art in the Armed Forces With Which Comrade Lin Piao Entrusted Comrade Chiang Ch'ing." *Peking Review* no23, June 2, 1967:13.

particularly when these were art world officials. In fact, it has been so common in China for art criticism to serve political ends that few statements can be taken at face value. Over the last thirty years, the discourse of art in China has become a treacherous labyrinth, an elaborate construction where one must take into account the hierarchy of the art world, the political motives of the speaker, and even the media and tradition in which he works. One should also bear in mind that the challenges of creation and the cultural crisis itself did not apply to the avant-garde alone, but also to the official realist artists, as well as to the re-emerging traditional *guohua* artists, all of whom had their own values and competing visions of the future of Chinese art.

Secondly, the idea that such art is insignificant because it is not original or new but merely a reproduction of Western art trends cannot be completely defended. As Arthur Danto has demonstrated, virtually identical works can have very different meanings depending on the artist's intention and on the time they were produced.¹³ Given that these works were also appearing in a very different cultural context, the possibilities become even more complex. This was particularly true since imitation was not really the artists' goal. As was the case with My Father, probably the best known oil painting of the eighties, artists were appropriating the ideas and techniques they felt allowed them to express themselves best.

1.2 Negotiating Culture

The eighties were an exciting decade for artists partly because there seemed to be no clear-cut direction for art creation. The Party's efforts to break away from Maoism towards more pragmatic policies had important consequences on the cultural front: the government ceased to have a clear imposable line on culture; the system itself was grappling with new directions and important conferences were organised to discuss all aspects of China's cultural future.¹⁴ The enthusiasm with which intellectuals took up the discussion took it beyond official arenas, creating generalised debates among individuals. The result of all this was that

¹³ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Harvard 1981.

¹⁴ Wang Jing, *High Culture Fever. Politics, Aesthetics and Ideology in Deng's China*. University of California Press 1996:48-51.

the state ceased to be able to control and guide discussion effectively but instead sought to limit the boundaries of discussion. In terms of the eighties (and nineties) the limit to freedom of expression set by the Party meant not upsetting the Four Cardinal Principles: adhering to the socialist road; the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the CCP and Marxism-Leninism/Mao Zedong Thought.

Freedom of expression, although limited, was greater than at any period of the Mao era. Artists could adopt a whole range of positions with regard to the choices they faced. This was particularly exciting since artists were also discovering diversity after a period of standardisation. Not only this, but they began to meet this challenge from a variety of different personal backgrounds. An artist's age and education, the media he was trained in¹⁵, his cultural background and ethnicity were all factors in determining his interests, the challenges he faced and how he choose to face them. This thesis will attempt to clarify some of the difficult issues of identity and choice that have been obscured by political manipulation of Chinese culture and identity throughout the century. For this reason our narrative has to begin at the turn of the century, before Mao's unified vision of China's "new culture" was imposed.

Mao's proposal of a "new culture" for China was a crucial moment when a new national identity was defined, with a Communist society as its goal.¹⁶ Communism became central to the new national identity and new symbols of allegiance were created to reflect this, from the red national flag to the invention of a national emblem to be displayed on public buildings and worn on official uniforms (fig.1.01).¹⁷ New models for art were also developed. Admiring The Foundation of State (fig.1.02) by Dong Xiwen (1914-1973), Mao

¹⁵Some artists for instance were educated solely in the tradition of Soviet Realism. "Tradition" to them had an entirely different meaning to a *guohua* artist of the "first generation".

¹⁶For a study of how philosophy was reinterpreted see Louie, K *Inheriting Tradition. Interpretations of Classical Philosophers in Communist China 1949-1966*. Oxford University Press 1986. Especially pages 24-28

¹⁷ The symbolism of the emblem is easily readable. The wheat sheaf round the edges, and the gearwheel at the bottom symbolise China's modern agriculture and industry; the entrance of the Forbidden City symbolises the traditional seat of power and government; the large star half surrounded by four small stars represent central China and its four autonomous regions (significantly placed in a lower position); the red ribbon and the red background symbolise the Communist Party.

The design specifications of the national emblem were published in *Renmin Meishu* 5 (12/9/1950), together with instructions of where, how and by whom it should be used.

is reported to have exclaimed "Our paintings, if we chose to exhibit them internationally, would find nothing to rival them because of the fact that we have a unique national form."¹⁸

The enormous changes that took place in the Mao era are covered in Chapter 3 in which we shall examine the politics of the new cultural identity and the delicate balance of power between the elements defining it: the Party; the intellectuals; and the masses. This is followed by an analysis of how the tradition of *guohua* was reformed to conform to the new requirements. Finally we see how art was co-opted into the project of transforming society through total popularisation and the emulation of new models.

The consequences of cultural changes during the Mao era were so profound that people brought up at different stages of this process grew to have a completely different relation to their cultural heritage and perhaps even a different sense of identity. These differences were so great that artists were defined as belonging to a given generation according to time they began to be active in the art world: The first generation refers to artists who were already well known before 1950 - they grew up in a largely traditional China which was still very open to outside influences; The second generation refers to artists who came into the art world in the fifties. They were mostly educated in Soviet Realism and new *guohua*. Their artistic careers were abruptly interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. The third generation had grown up during the Cultural Revolution and entered the art world after 1976. The little education they had was mostly political and hostile to tradition. On the other hand, many had a rich life experience as educated youths sent to the countryside.¹⁹

The coexistence of the different generations in the eighties was of the utmost importance for it meant the survival of different memories both of pre-reform traditional *guohua* and of the early modernist movement. The first four decades of the century were a period which laid the foundations for the fundamental changes that took place in the latter half of the century. In particular, the definition of nation centred on the concept of race made

¹⁸ Mao Zedong quoted in Jin Zhilin "That is China, That is Our Great Country" *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1991. For a history of the revision and restoration of this painting see Andrews 1994:75-86

¹⁹ Deng Pingxiang "On the Third Generation of Artists" *Meishu Sichao* 1/1985:3-5.

new responses to traditional culture possible.²⁰ At a time when China was put under intense pressure by foreign imperial powers, Chen Duxiu, a leading intellectual of the May the Fourth Movement, wrote:

I would much rather see the past culture of our nation disappear than see our nation die out now because of its unfitness for living in the modern world. . . The progress of the world is like that of a fleet horse, galloping and galloping onward. Whatever cannot skilfully change itself and progress along with the world will find itself eliminated by natural selection because of failure to adapt to the environment.²¹

Mayching Kao, in her study of early twentieth century Chinese art, describes artistic absorption Western art movements as a fusion of cultural internationalism with political nationalism, and adds that "on the strength of this concept the nationalists were free to make any intellectual choice, however unorthodox in terms of Chinese culture, if only it were nationally useful".²² Chapter 2 of this work looks at the broadening ideas of art which accompanied the May the Fourth Movement. It begins with an account of the heritage of Chinese art before the onslaught of the movement, and ends with an analysis of the growing discourse concerning potential restrictions on the absorption of foreign styles due to China's social and historical circumstances.

The four chapters on the eighties cover the same time span but each one deals with different issues. The general background for creation is provided in Chapter 4 with particular focus on the difficulty encountered by the art world authorities who sought to make a break with Cultural Revolution art without renouncing control over art creation. Part one of the chapter looks at the transition period between Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping and how daring art briefly reflected Deng's ascent to power, whilst the exhibition system inherited

²⁰The accepted view of the imperial self conception of China was that as *tianxia* it "was a world itself, a world whose values were Value, whose civilisation was Civilisation, a transnational antithesis to barbarism." Levenson, Joseph *Revolution and Cosmopolitanism* University of California Press 1971:27. For similar views see Wang Gungwu 1991:147 and Hsiao Kung-chuan *A History of Chinese Political Thought* Princeton 1979. Introduction. This view has recently been disputed by Dikötter who argues that Chinese identity was also influenced by ideas of race. Dikötter, F. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* Hong Kong 1992:3.

²¹ Published in *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) 15/9/1915. Translation from Teng and Fairbank 1959:242.

²²Kao, Mayching *China's Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937* Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University 1972:208

from the Mao era continued to play an important part in embodying the official Party standpoint. Part two examines the purging of the guilt of the Cultural Revolution through exhibitions, but how, at the same time, multiple meanings could not be controlled once artists broke away from the rigid formulae of Mao era art. Part four examines attempts to uphold new models for creation during the 6th National Art Exhibition in 1984.

A significant feature of the eighties was the holding of an enormous number of conferences. These took place not only to discuss controversial issues in theory and practice, but were also held as a matter of course to review exhibitions. Such meetings, which in the Mao era would have been held for the purpose of indoctrination, continued to play an important role in consensus-forming during the eighties. Yet now, far from being used to assert a single orthodoxy, they often became opportunities for articulate artists to argue away old dogma. The first of such conferences in this study deals with the criticism of the "nationalisation of art" and appears in part three of the fourth chapter.

In Chapter 5, we deal with one of the most complex issues of the decade. Here we take up the idea of the time gap and the question of how one creates new and meaningful art. This question was largely formulated in terms of then-current debates over modernity and tradition. Could tradition furnish new meaning, or was the only choice to catch up with the West? This over-simplification hid danger, since to many artists "tradition" represented a problem: it had either been "politically engineered" or else it was irrelevant. Nevertheless, questions of tradition and modernity were hot topics in the mid-eighties and were discussed at length in the national conference on how to develop *guohua* in 1984 and the theory conference in 1986. Some of the sharpest observations, however, were to be found in dissenting articles: was it possible to develop *guohua*? what was the meaning of "tradition"? what were the parameters of "tradition"? what was art history all about? In addition to these, the review of the New Space exhibition conference is an excellent example of how artists could use such opportunities to deconstruct the official discourse of art and turn arguments in their own favour.

The fact that China is a multi-national state with fifty six acknowledged ethnic groups has received little attention in accounts of the eighties except in those cases where minorities figure as subject matter. Yet the minorities too were creating art. Their marginalisation reflects how the minorities were regarded, not so much by official art critics but by the avant-garde, since most minority artists worked in quite conservative ways. Chapter 6 looks at the art of the ethnic minorities and of the cultural periphery of China, where there seems to be a strange opposition between the Han and minority artists. While the Han artists look to the minorities for an image of the self, less restricted by social and visual conventions, minority artists seem to be embracing realism. How far did the periphery offer an alternative viewpoint, from which to proceed to a critique of central, largely urban Han culture?

Chapter 7 returns to the all-important aspect of politics in art. It begins with the reinterpretation of the slogan "returning art to the people" (which reveals the avant-garde's unexpected link to Mao era aesthetics). In a strange twist, it becomes increasingly apparent that whereas in the Mao era art had to serve politics, the official line in the eighties increasingly strove to keep artists from such activism. The avant-garde, however, actively pursued socially provocative art, much like the intelligentsia in other fields who felt they had a mission to change China. Another curious link to Mao era ideology was the idea that art development was bound to (or determined by) social change. This is apparent in the debates about pseudo-modernism and post-modernism in China. The most subversive expression of this idea was the argument that modern art simply could not exist without the correct social conditions of science, humanism and so on. These issues were put to the test in the 1989 avant-garde exhibition and consigned to history on June the Fourth.

1.3 Review of Sources

The information for this thesis was collected on field research in China in 1993/1994 and is based on interviews, informal conversations and published material. The primary material gathered was essential to the thesis and provided much of the direction for further research. As primary evidence, however, it presented difficulties: first, because most of the

valuable insights were given during informal conversations rather than during taped interviews; second, because many of the key figures had already left China and had dispersed across the globe. Furthermore, it was difficult to find much of the original art work of the eighties since it had either been sold, lost or had simply deteriorated.

For practical reasons research for this thesis was limited to six provinces which make up three very different areas, both geographically and culturally. An introduction to each area is provided at the beginning of chapters five, six and seven. These areas were chosen because of their distinct differences: it was hoped that they would provide the most indicative settings for some of the issues to be explored. Very briefly then: the Jiang-Zhe area (one of the strongholds of traditional *guohua* and of the avant-garde movement) would be a good place to explore the issues of tradition and modernity. The South-West, which is heavily populated by ethnic minorities lent itself to the examination of issues of “centre” and “periphery”. Finally, Beijing, the capital, was the obvious place to look at the problem of politics. The author’s aim in choosing three different centres was to aid the reader in avoiding notions of China as a homogenous whole. To abide by this idea, most (but not necessarily all) of the artworks within each of the three chapters will belong to the given area. In order to set out the problems discussed in each chapter, however, I have drawn freely from the most relevant articles from the whole of China.

The bulk of the textual material analysed comes from a small number of periodicals. It might be expected that these would provide merely the Party opinions on art, but it is worth remembering that although until 1988 everybody (with very few exception) was a state employee, this did not mean they could not voice different and dissenting opinions. It is therefore worth giving a potted history of these periodicals.

It was in fact the art magazine *Meishu*, which for years had served as a Party organ, disseminating guidelines on art, which broke the ice in the late seventies and began to carry articles and reproductions which hit society’s raw nerves. After a period of relative caution, during the Anti Spiritual Pollution Campaign, it resumed publishing daring articles in 1985 and 1986. By this time, however, its role as a forum of discussion was overshadowed by the

quiet growth of alternative publications with new cultural agendas which by late 1985 had already made a significant impact on the art world. The magazines *Meishu Sichao*, *Jiangsu Huakan*, *Zhongguo Meishubao* and *Huajia* were but a few of the most important magazines. Although all these magazines were still officially sponsored, this thaw gave greater scope for voicing alternative opinions, as is evident from the case of the outspoken art critic Li Xianting (b.1950). Li, whose name can be found listed as responsible editor in all the most exciting issues of *Meishu* at the beginning of the eighties, was fired in 1983 for producing an issue of the magazine devoted to abstract art. He was re-employed by some former colleagues when the *Zhongguo Meishubao* was set up in 1985, and continued his controversial work there until the magazine was shut down in 1989.

Apart from these periodicals, a detailed account of the eighties was also available in three histories published in Chinese. These are: *A History of Chinese Modern Painting*, by Zhang Shaoxia (b.1953) and Li Xiaoshan (b.1957), the *History of Contemporary Chinese Art: 1985 to '86* by Gao Minglu (b.1949) and others and *A History of Chinese Modern Art 1979-1989* Lü Peng (b.1956) and Yi Dan (b.1960). The latter two, especially, carry full and comprehensive accounts of the eighties, and provide an invaluable reference source, especially on the avant-garde. Less material is available in English, although a few books have covered this period either fully or partially. These include works by Joan Lebold Cohen, Julia Andrews, Maria Galikowski and Michael Sullivan.²³ The fullest accounts, however are to be found in Hans Van Dijk's study²⁴, which provides a summary of the main trends and debates until the mid to late eighties, and Gao Minglu and Julia Andrews' article which relates how the avant-garde functioned in opposition to official art.²⁵ An interesting addition

23 Cohen, Joan Lebold *The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986* New York 1987. Andrews, Julia F. *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China 1949-1979* University of California Press 1994. Galikowski, Maria *Art and Politics in China 1949-1984* The Chinese University of Hong Kong 1998. Sullivan, Michael *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* University of California 1996.

24 Van Dijk, Hans "Painting in China After the Cultural Revolution: Style Developments and Theoretical Debates" *China Information* vols VI/VII nos.3&4 (Winter 1991/Spring 1992).

25 Andrews, Julia F. and Gao Minglu "The Avant-garde's challenge to official art" in Davis, Deborah S. Richard Krauss, Barry Naughton and Elizabeth J. Perry eds *Urban spaces in contemporary China: The potential for autonomy and community in Post-Mao China* Washington 1995.

to this list is Silbergeld's study on the *guohua* artist Li Hua and his conflicts with the art world officialdom.²⁶

Another useful source in English is the catalogues of exhibitions held outside China, which have followed the changing face of Chinese art since the Open Door Policy made such events possible. The "Contemporary Chinese Paintings" exhibition held in San Francisco (1979), focused on the question of whether traditional Chinese painting had survived the sustained attacks of the Cultural Revolution.²⁷ "Beyond the Open Door" looks at the initial influence of Western art in the early days of the Open Door Policy.²⁸ This was followed by "I Don't Want to Play Cards with Cezanne" which explored the difficult relationship between Chinese art and the inflowing Western art which now seemed to overwhelm Chinese youth.²⁹ The "China Avant-Garde" exhibition (Berlin) presented a view of important artists of the eighties and early nineties as an already confident avant-garde movement, while "China's New Art: Post 1989" (Hong Kong) and the 1993 entry to the Venice Biennial showed the art produced in the wake of the June the Fourth crackdown.³⁰ More recently, the "Inside Out" exhibition was a retrospective of the past two decades of art in China combined with the recent art of Taiwan and a look at the trajectory of artists who have chosen to work abroad.³¹

A number of other works in English also offer valuable insights into aspects of the art world which formed useful background knowledge for this thesis: Stefan Landsberger follows the adaptation of propaganda poster to the Four Modernisations Era;³² Richard Krauss explores the impact of free-market reforms on cultural production;³³ Dru Gladney

²⁶ Silbergeld, J with Gong Jisui *Contradictions. Artistic Life, the Socialist State and the Chinese Painter Li Huasheng* University of Washington Press 1993

²⁷ Lim, Lucy (edited by) *Contemporary Chinese Paintings* San Francisco Chinese Cultural Foundation 1979

²⁸ Strassberg, Richard E *Beyond the Open Door. Contemporary Paintings from the People's Republic of China* Pacific Asia Museum, California 1987.

²⁹ Strassberg, Richard E *I Don't Want to Play Cards With Cezanne and Other Works: Selections from the Chinese "New Wave" and "Avant-Garde" Art of the Eighties* Pasadena, Asia Pacific Museum 1991.

³⁰ *China's New Art Post 1989* Hanart Gallery 1993.

³¹ Gao Minglu (edited by) *Inside Out. New Chinese Art* University of California 1998.

³² Landsberger, Stefan R. *Visualising the Future: Chinese Propaganda Posters from the "Four Modernisations" Era, 1978-1988*. PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 1994.

³³ Kraus, Richard "China's artists between plan and market" in Davis, Deborah S. Richard Krauss, Barry Naughton and Elizabeth J. Perry eds *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China: The Potential for Autonomy and Community in Post-Mao China* Washington 1995. I should like to add here that this aspect did not directly

looks at the depiction of ethnic minorities in state sponsored cultural production, and its role in constructing a "Han" majority identity;³⁴ In the wider field of literary and intellectual currents, Wang Jin's *High Culture Fever* is one of the fullest analyses of the intellectual turmoil and complexity of the eighties.³⁵

influence the fine arts until the late eighties. The free-market effect at first was felt by the greater insitutionalisation of art as the local governments had more money available to devote to official organisations. Although the commercialisation of art began in the eighties it was very limited and prices were low, it was only after 89 that the foreign market really picked up and artists could consider art as a primary source of income, thus enabling them support themselves without being dependent on a state salary.

34Gladney, Dru "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities" *Journal of Asian Studies* no53 (1/1994):91

35Wang Jing, *High Culture Fever. Politics, Aesthetics and Ideology in Deng's China*. University of California Press 1996.

Chapter 2: 1911-1949

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the state of painting in China early this century and to trace the extent of change that had already taken place in society and in the realm of ideas. Periods of turmoil and conflict have often been the most productive in terms of ideas and change, and this was no exception in the early twentieth century. Unfortunately, the subsequent historical period was to wipe out the existing strands of diversity, making it very difficult to picture the wealth of these ideas. Nevertheless, the developments in the early twentieth century played a crucial role in laying the basis for the new culture in the eighties, and in forming the Chinese understanding of Western ideas.

2.1 The Painting Heritage of 20th Century China

The most important tradition of art in the Qing dynasty was that of "literati" painting. Yet when we speak of literati painting in terms of "art" we must be aware that this was not equivalent to the Western or twentieth century Chinese concept of art. The introduction of Western concepts of art, and the completely alien category of *meishu* (fine art) effected a great change in the understanding of Chinese cultural artifacts both in China and abroad. Along the Western model, the introduction of this concept referred to the same categories as the usage of the Western term, and Chinese art came to share many of the concerns and anxieties of Western art.³⁶

Before the introduction of this concept, what we now consider separately as painting, sculpture, printing, drawing etc, were part of a holistic cultural pattern. At the highest level of the generic hierarchy of traditional Chinese culture, the most considered cultural pastimes were poetry, followed by calligraphy, and only then painting.³⁷ Unlike in the West, the most

³⁶See Lu Xun "Draft for Opinions on the Propagation of Art" 1913. in *Lu Xun Quanjí* vol 8, page 45. In this article Lu Xun identifies '*meishu*' as a word translated from the English 'art or fine art'. He traces the origins of this word to ancient Greece and gives an account of its changing categories through Plato (427-347 BC) to C. Batteux (1713-1780), G. Hegel (1770-1831) and S. Colvin (1845-1927).

³⁷ "From the elite's standpoint there were two types of worthwhile art: that which the elite enjoyed but did not create, and that which the elite created and therefore esteemed the most. The former included the work of skilled craftsmen, from elegant ancient bronzes to colourful contemporary ceramic; the latter embraced the fine

prominent painters would not be considered primarily as painters or "artists." Painting was a subsidiary activity of a gentleman, and a good painting, like good calligraphy would be the reflection of personality tempered by many years of self-cultivation, and utmost importance was attached to the moral character of the individual that created it. These activities unlike the present concept of art had no social function as such, but instead embodied a deeply ingrained idea of morality and order.

When Zhang Yanyuan wrote the *Record of Famous Painters of all Dynasties* (circa 847 A.D), considered the first major history of Chinese art, he traced the idea of morality and order in painting back to the origins of writing when the sages of antiquity and the first kings accepted Heaven's command and received the divine tablets. The account tells that at first painting and writing were not differentiated, but these later split into three distinct forms of depiction: the hexagrams of the *Yi Jing*, representations of the principles of the universe; written characters, which had to do with the representation of knowledge; and painting, the representation of forms. He also clearly set out the moral character of painting and its role as part of the fabric which held the Chinese universe in order:

Now painting is a thing which perfects civilised teachings and helps social relationships. It penetrates completely the divine permutations of nature and fathoms recondite and subtle things.³⁸

All these forms of depiction played different roles in helping to understand and maintain the order of the universe, and early painting was dominated by didactic figure painting. However, painting not only embodied order through its subject matter but also through the brushwork and concept of the work. The most influential ideas on this subject were the ambiguous "Six Laws" of Xie He (active ca. 500-535) of the Liang dynasty: "animation through spirit consonance"; "structural method in the use of the brush"; "fidelity

arts of the brush - painting and calligraphy. Popular art, from wall paintings and icons to folk crafts such as basketwork, fans, umbrellas, toys and papercuts remained vital and vigorous throughout the Qing period, but it was seldom taken seriously by Qing art connoisseurs." Smith, Richard, J. *China's Cultural Heritage. The Ch'ing Dynasty 1644-1912* Westview Press, Colorado 1983:156

³⁸ Bush, Susan and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* Harvard University Press 1985:49

to the object in portraying forms"; "conformity to kind in applying colour"; "proper planning in placing"; "transmission through copying".³⁹ Of these the first was the most important as it referred not so much to technique but to the state of mind of the artist and his relation to the universe.

By the Song dynasty when Guo Roxu came to write his *Experiences in Painting*, didactic subject matter had lost much of its importance, and in the interpretation of the first of Xie He's laws, much emphasis has been placed on the cultural level and moral personality of the painter:

Now the last five, from "structural method in use of the brush" on, are open to study. "Spirit consonance" however, necessarily involves an innate knowledge; under no circumstances can it be secured through cleverness or close application, nor will time aid its attainment. It is an unspoken accord, a spiritual communion, "something that happens without one's knowing how".

In trying to reason [the matter out], I have in my humble way observed that the majority of rare works of the past have been done by talented worthies of high position or by gentlemen of high degree [living in retirement in] the wilderness; [by persons, that is], who have followed the dictates of loving kindness and have sought delight in the arts; who have "explored the abstruse" and "plumbed the depths"; and so have filled their paintings with all the lofty courtliness of their emotions. If one's ranking among men may be lofty, it follows that his "spirit consonance" cannot but be lofty. If his "spirit consonance" be lofty, it follows that "animation" cannot but be secured. So it has been said that "in the highest heights of the spiritual, he can deal with the quintessence."

It is a general truth that a painting must encompass "spirit consonance" to be hailed as [one of the] treasures of its age. Otherwise though [it represent] the utmost efforts of cunning thought, it will be no more than common artisan's work.⁴⁰

The Song dynasty is considered one of the high points of Chinese civilisation, when Chinese culture reached new unprecedented heights. This flourishing coincided with the rise of a new class of officials, the "literati" scholar officials. In the Tang dynasty there had been

³⁹ *Ibid*:95. These laws have had various interpretations through history and have been translated in a number of different ways. *Ibid*: 10-17

⁴⁰ Soper, Alexander. *Kuo Jo Hsü's Experiences in Painting (T'u-hua chien-wen chih): An Eleventh Century History of Chinese Painting* Washington, D.C. 1951: 15

a relatively strong feudal hereditary aristocracy, and officials generally came from established families. By the Song dynasty, however, the imperial examination system came to have more importance and men were able to reach high posts on the basis of merit alone. These men were then highly able and cultured men with much moral seriousness, who as well as taking an active part in government were also major literary figures of their day setting new styles in all the major cultural activities such as poetry and calligraphy as well as painting.⁴¹

The term "scholars' painting" (士人画) was first used by the Song dynasty scholar official Su Shi (1037-1101) to distinguish scholars' painting from that of the professionals. He writes:

Looking at scholars' paintings is like judging the best horse of an empire, one sees how spirit has been brought out; but when it comes to artisan painters, one usually just gets whip and skin, stable and fodder, without a speck of superior achievement. [Sung] Han-chieh's is truly scholars' painting (shi-ren hua).⁴²

From this time on painting began to be dominated by the ideas of the scholar class, and at the same time became a polite art like poetry which served as an expressive outlet and was to be done in one's leisure time.⁴³ Such paintings were then often done spontaneously at social gatherings, or as gifts, rather than for decoration or permanent display. In terms of stylistic changes, this brought about an increased spontaneity of brushwork, an attempt to capture the essence of something rather than its outer appearance. This was also in keeping with the distancing oneself from professional painters in the Song dynasty who would work in very detailed heavily worked paintings, especially what is nowadays known as the *gongbi* technique. This distinction also showed itself in terms of subject-matter where landscapes, bamboos, plums, orchids, trees rocks flowers and birds were given preference over figures, animals and religious topics.

⁴¹ Bush, Susan *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-Ch'ang (1555-1626)* Harvard 1971:4

⁴² *Ibid*:29

⁴³ *Ibid*:7

This tradition continued to dominate literati circles during the Qing dynasty by which time, after several hundred years of development, it became somewhat conventional. Painters paid much attention to master a variety of styles from famous painters of the past, and hence relied a lot on copying for learning and transmission. In the late Ming dynasty theories began to be devised which chose a select number of artists from past dynasties as models to be emulated as the true tradition of literati painting. The most famous of these theories was the theory of the Northern and Southern schools by the famous Ming official Dong Qichang (1555-1636).⁴⁴ The paintings of his followers, known as the "Four Wangs" then became hugely influential in the Qing dynasty and formed the orthodox line of painting.

Although the art of the literati was the most influential art practised in the Qing dynasty, and almost exclusively the only art written about - since great collectors were either of this class or aspired to be of this class - this was not necessarily the only art practised. China has a rich tradition in folk arts among which is woodcut printing which is different and has quite distinct value from literati painting.⁴⁵ Yet, there is perhaps a meeting of the traditions of popular art and high art in decorative *guohua* painting. More specifically whereas the literati scholar painting was part of the personal world of the gentry, and thus belonged to private spaces, to be shared with like-minded friends, more neutral painting was required as decoration for the more formal or public parts of one's residence.

A study on Chinese Pictorial Art by R.H.van Gulik describes this situation in an interior of an upper middle class 19th-century house in Beijing, and the different spaces paintings occupied. He makes a special distinction between the paintings kept in the library or studio and only brought out on occasion for appreciation, and paintings which were to be found in the main hall, and would be on semi-permanent display. The most important painting of the latter category was the *tang hua*, a large painting hung at the back of the hall, where visiting guests would get an impression of the taste of the host. These paintings then

⁴⁴ For an account of Dong Qichang's painting see Ho, Waikam *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636* University of Washington Press 1992. For his theories see Bush 1971:158-179.

⁴⁵ An obvious exception to this is Chen Hongshou who depicted many folk themes in his painting and was also engaged in woodcut printing. Later Ren Bonian was also to be part of a woodcut studio to supplement his living.

had to be of a high standard, and would often be landscape paintings. Various other paintings might also be hung in the hall, and conventions for these began to be set down in the Ming dynasty.

One such example is the "Calendar for Displaying of Scrolls" by Wen Zhenheng (1585-1645), in which he describes many types of paintings. The author lists many popular subjects that rarely figure in collectors' accounts and has a tendency to disparage subject matter such as religious painting which was considered unsuitable for literati.⁴⁶ The existence of this tradition is of no small importance, and it is no accident that two of the most important late Qing *guohua* painters who made the transition to the twentieth century, Ren Bonian (1840-1895) and Qi Baishi (1864-1957), were not members of the cultural élite, but artists who rose from the more popular traditions of painting to make their mark in the literati world.

No doubt part of their (figs 2.01 & 2.02) attractiveness was their very fresh and creative approach at a time when literati painting, dominated by ideas of orthodoxy had become to some extent stagnant.⁴⁷ One should bear in mind that there was perhaps little incentive for innovation in the practice of literati painting in a cultural system where painting was often a social activity, a "polite art" like poetry and calligraphy which were "assets for a gentleman's career in government career and talents to be displayed before one's friends".⁴⁸ Professional painters had more of a reason to be innovative. In cities like Shanghai, social change and the appearance in the art market of a new class of businessmen-entrepreneurs with different cultural values and taste created a demand for new art.

⁴⁶ "Calendar for Displaying Scrolls" in Gulik, Robert H. van *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* Rome 1958:4

⁴⁷ See (fig 2.01) Ren Bonian Zhao Dechang and his Wife 1885, a portrait of Ren Bonian's wife's grandparents. It has been suggested that the juxtaposition of the figures and the relaxed informality of the picture may have been influenced by photography. Portrait painting, a subject not favoured by the literati, was influenced by realistic techniques earlier than *shanshui* painting. Soong, James Han-hsi *A Visual Experience in Nineteenth Century China. Jen Po-nien (1840-1895) and the Shanghai School of Painting* Stanford University PhD 1978:84.

⁴⁸ Bush 1971:7. During the Qing dynasty painting was also considered one of the "four noble recreations" proper for a gentleman. The other three recreations being: playing the *qin*, *weiqi* (a board game sometimes known in the West by its Japanese name *go*), and calligraphy. See Smith 1983: 231

The rise of the professional artists to positions of considerable fame upset the values of traditional culture and their innovations were at first not readily accepted in literati circles.⁴⁹ In Beijing, the Shanghai school was considered plebeian, commercial, showy and limited in subject matter.⁵⁰ Nevertheless it was soon to claim an influential place in Chinese art history. Not only did the artists fulfil the all-important criteria of the "brush manner" of literati painting, but as popular and commercial elements in Chinese art became increasingly important, prejudice against them faded.

The popular roots of Qi Baishi's painting were also very strong but in a different and more powerful way. Qi Baishi's rise to fame was a long and difficult process. Even though he gained important friends and admirers such as the artist Chen Shizeng (1876-1924), who he met in 1917, there were still times when he would come up against social prejudices.⁵¹ Yet instead of denying his background Qi Baishi clung to his peasant roots and had a strong disdain for the snobbishness of literati circles and the treachery of officialdom. In subject matter Qi then often retained the feeling of his youth and peasant life. Such paintings as Mice 1947 (fig 2.02)⁵² recall the evenings reading by an oil lamp when mice would come to steal the oil. Nevertheless, the feeling towards the mice is one of intimacy grown over the many evenings in their company, in the countryside where mice were often seen as having the same hardworking characteristics as people. The inscription on this picture, painted when Qi was eighty years old, reads "rats would wish all people to be rich, the thought behind the wish is not selfless." It reflects on his own success through hard work over many years and is complemented by one of his seals inscribed "the rich man of three hundred stone seals."

⁴⁹ In traditional culture it was very difficult for professional painters to gain recognition on their own merit, and many would have to rely on forgery or copying the styles of their better known contemporaries to make a living. Ren Bonian, when working as a fanshop apprentice painted fakes copying the style of Ren Xiong, an elder contemporary. (Soong 1978:42). Early in his career, Qi Baishi was sometimes asked by some of his patrons to omit his signature from his paintings so they could add in the signature of a better known artist. Jung Ying Tsao *The Paintings of Xu Gu and Qi Baishi* University of Washington Press 1993:200.

⁵⁰ Soong 1978:10

⁵¹ Jung Ying Tsao describes an incident when someone snubbed Qi Baishi and behind his back criticised his paintings and poetry as "coarse, uncultivated and utterly worthless." Such incidents were later inspire a number of paintings entitled If Someone Reviles Me, I'll Revile Him Too. Jung 1993:208.

⁵² Ellsworth *Later Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 1800-1950* Random House, New York 1987: Vol 2 page 102,27.

The changes I have just outlined were negligible in terms of the cultural overhaul that was about to happen. As foreign powers increasingly threatened China's sovereignty, Chinese intellectuals began to look to the West for new ideas that might help their country to survive. The ideology of "nationalism", which increasingly defined Chineseness by race rather than culture, became popular among young revolutionaries and in 1911 the Qing dynasty was overthrown and China made the change from empire to republic.

2.2 The Broadening Discourse of Art

The years that followed the 1911 revolution were rich in ideas and activity, and this decade saw the broadening of the discourse of art well beyond its previous boundaries. Much of this broadening was in terms of absorbing styles and ideas of Western art, but it also had another dimension, in terms of the range of people who were now practising art and joining in debates on art. Again, some of these changes were brought about by changes in the structure of the Chinese art world itself, the so-called democratisation of art which began to take lower forms of art into discussion, and the setting up of art periodicals in which these issues were popularised and debated.

These changes were also part of the May the Fourth New Cultural Movement which sought to reform Chinese culture. In Beijing Chen Duxiu established the *New Youth* magazine which called for the destruction of stagnant traditions and the ideological awakening of China's youths. In the academic world, Cai Yuanpei who was chancellor of Beijing University pursued a policy of "education above politics", and creating a situation where ideas were tolerated and could flourish. The ideas of this movement, proposed as solutions for China, were often the result of knowledge brought back by students returning from abroad and often differed according to their country of study. From America, Hu Shi imported Dewey's pragmatism, and advocated the reform of the written language; Japan was the centre of much revolutionary activity influenced by Russian literature and the theories of Socialism, Communism and Anarchism; France added ideas of utopian Communism, socialism and anarchism, as well as ideas on democracy and liberalism

The influence of Western ideas on art lagged slightly behind other fields, but the influence of Western techniques in art predated the May the Fourth Movement. The importation and dissemination Western art education can be traced back to the earlier educational reforms of Zhang Zhidong. Zhang saw the strength of Western nations as coming from education and tried to establish colleges and universities in Beijing and in the capital of each province, middle schools in all prefectures, and elementary schools in all districts. In 1886 he also sent forty students to study in England, France and Germany, and later sent many more students to Japan. He then drew up an educational scheme for China based on the information supplied by students who returned from Japan.⁵³ Art, or drawing was then among the new disciplines imported from Japan as a branch of Western technology. Mayching Kao writes that in 1902 drawing was formally written into the curriculum of schools of all levels and that its importance lay in the advantages Western techniques offered for drafting, cartography and illustration. She goes on to say that Western art "for the first time, reached China's educated class not as a curiosity, but as something for practical application, contributing to the progress of China".⁵⁴

A further step forward was taken in 1912 when, as minister of education, Cai Yuanpei proposed art education as one of his five principles.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the extent of the influence of Western art and art ideas was limited. Although it had become relatively well

⁵³ Teng and Fairbank, J. *China's Response to the West, A Documentary Survey 1839-1923* Cambridge, U.S. 1954:166.

⁵⁴ Kao, Mayching *China's Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937* Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University Press 1988.:63

⁵⁵ In his "Views on the Aims of Education" (1912), Cai Yuanpei outlined five principles of education. These principles he then subdivided as being either subordinate to, or above politics. Military education and utilitarian education, he argued, should be under government control, being the principles for "strengthening our troops and enriching the nation". Moral education, "to make people work for mutual preservation and mutual protection", for the time being was also subordinate to politics. The last two principles, "education for a world view" and 'aesthetic education' related to the individual's attitude towards existence and were therefore beyond politics. Central to both these ideas is a wish to transcend national and cultural boundaries to pursue a more universal idea of reality: "We must follow the general rule of freedom of thought and freedom of expression, and not allow any one branch of philosophy or any one tenet of religion to confine our minds, but always aim at a lofty universal point of view which is valid without regard to space or time". [Teng & Fairbank 1954:235-238].

Later, Cai Yuanpei was to expand on his idea of aesthetic education in his 'Theory of Substituting Aesthetic Education For Religion', 1917. For more information see Kao, Mayching 1972:72-75.

popularised through adverts, calendars, cartoons and newspaper illustration it had almost no impact on the traditional painting élite.

The first influences of Western art on traditional painting began to creep in via Japan with the experiments of the "Lingnan school" of painters in Guangzhou. In the mid-eighteenth century, there had been a movement for wholesale Westernisation in Japanese art, but in the 1880s, Ernest Fenellosa, an American educational advisor proposed that this was leading to a neglect of native art and advocated a return to tradition. This resulted in a nationalistic movement in art, which however, retained many of the already popularised ideas and techniques of Western art.⁵⁶ Gao Jianfu (1879-1951), Gao Qifeng (1889-1935) and Chen Shuren (1883-1949), the main members of the Lingnan school, all studied in Japan for some time and imported these ideas to China where they advocated "New National Painting".⁵⁷ Their early pictures however, still remained very much within the categories of traditional painting subject matter, while their innovations consisted in adopting techniques of Western painting - fixed perspective, shading, atmosphere and light effects - already used by their Japanese counterparts. Starting around 1915, Gao Jianfu also began experimenting with new subject matter, making the first attempts to portray elements of modern life, such as aeroplanes (fig 2.03).

Despite the introduction of Western techniques into the Chinese teaching system, there was no oil painting in China in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ By now a number of artists were already studying outside China (fig 2.04)⁵⁹, but the main movement of students abroad had not yet begun.⁶⁰ The first students to return from abroad played an important role in promoting oil painting in China. Zhou Xiang (1871-1933) who returned

⁵⁶ Croizier *Art and Revolution in Modern China* University of California 1988:26-37

⁵⁷ Chen Shuren studied at the Municipal Art School in Kyoto from 1906-1908. Gao Jianfu stayed in Japan from 1906 to 1908, bringing his younger brother, Qifeng over in 1907, however, there is almost no information about their studies.

⁵⁸ Tao Yongbai 1988:3 describes the lack of proper oil paints in China and the experiments to make paints.

⁵⁹ Li Tiefu (1868-1952) was the first student to study oil painting abroad, going to the United States in 1887. However, he did not return until 1930.

⁶⁰ A list of artists who went to study abroad, the countries they studied in and the dates they were there is given in Yuan Rongchun and Hu Guanghua, *A History of Art of the Republic of China: 1911 to 1949* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992:411.

from Japan and the United States in 1911 set up the first art college in China where he taught by copying pictures from magazines, and having the students in turn copy his copies. The teaching cannot have been very satisfactory for some of the early students who had come to Shanghai to study, headed by the seventeen year old Liu Haisu (1896-1994), decided to set up their own academy.⁶¹ Meanwhile Li Shutong (1880-1942) who had studied at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts from 1906 to 1911 also returned to China and began teaching at the art department of the Zhejiang First Normal School, Hangzhou. Li was credited with changing teaching methods from imitating works of the teacher or learning from copybooks to drawing from plaster casts, life drawing and outdoor sketching.⁶²

These developments rapidly led to a readjustment of cultural values and calls for the reform of Chinese art.⁶³ The reasons for this were not always purely artistic and some of the earliest calls for reform betray a concern for balance of power that revealed more practical concerns. In his "Catalogue of Chinese paintings in the Collection of the Thatched Hut among Ten Thousand Trees" [1917] Kang Youwei compared literati painting to European and American painting and asked, "is it not like lifting a rifle against a cannon that can wipe out fifty-three men in one go?".⁶⁴ Kang, who had visited Europe and been much impressed by what he saw, judged artistic progress by the degree of technical realism achieved. He likened European and American painting to that of the Tang and Song dynasties and lamented the present decline of Chinese painting, blaming it on the dominance of literati thought and their prejudice against artisan painting. He regretted that Chinese painting had broken away from reality due to the influence of Chan and the popularity of *xieyi* painting technique. The real source of his worries, however, seems to seep through when he observed that the apparatus of modern industry and commerce all depend on painting and that without reform of painting China would have no industry and commerce.

⁶¹ Kao Mayching 1972:71

⁶² *Ibid.*: 76-77

⁶³ Shui Tianzhong gives a very good introduction to the change of intellectual ideas on art during this period in his article "A Review of the debate on Innovating Chinese Painting" See Shui Tianzhong 1990:1. This article was extremely helpful in establishing the background and structure for this sub-chapter.

⁶⁴ Kang Youwei "Wanmu Caotang Cang Zhongguohua Mu Shu Wen" in Shen Peng and Chen Fusheng (edited by) *Collected Articles on Art*, no4 Renmin meishu chubanshe 1986:3

Soon afterwards, an article appeared in the reformist magazine *New Youth*⁶⁵ calling for an art revolution. Lü Wei (1896-1989), the author, raised the example of the Italian Futurist artist Marinetti, to call for a similar revolution in Chinese art. In fact, what he was revolting against was the spread of technically realistic, Western-influenced popular art among the masses. He lamented the decline of Chinese art and that with the spreading of art education and techniques many professional artists were taking advantage of their skills to appeal to the lust of the masses so that the masses no longer knew what art was. He suggested the art revolution should start by clarifying 1, the scope and essence of art, to let the masses know why art is art; 2, the original sources and principles of painting, sculpture and architecture since the Tang, to let the masses know what China's own art was like; 3, the changes in European and American art, and the real appearance of their new schools, letting the masses know their overall trends.

In response Chen Duxiu wrote "as for the newly popular Shanghai paintings of beautiful women (仕女圖), their naiveté and absurdity are like that of the *nannu chaibaidang* (男女拆白黨演) plays, and the new short story translations of the Tongcheng school whose members revere classical language (古文) and do not understand Western languages. They are like three freaks born from the same mother. I could not restrain a cry of despair if one was to take these three monsters as our new literature and art". To Chen, the problem of Chinese art stemmed from the legacy of the Four Wangs orthodox school of the Qing dynasty, whose paintings were mostly reinterpretations of pictures by famous masters. To reform Chinese painting, and its tendency to rely on copying, he said, "there is no alternative but to use the realistic spirit of Western art".⁶⁶

Following this rather slow start, magazines devoted specifically to art began to appear and these provided a forum for the importation and discussion of new ideas. *Meishu*, established in Shanghai in October 1918 published eight issues altogether, one of them devoted completely to the Post-Impressionists. Other issues discussed problems on art and

⁶⁵ Lü Wei "Art Revolution" *New Youth* (vol 6. no.1) 1918:1.

⁶⁶ Chen Duxiu "Answer to Lü Wei" *New Youth* (vol 6 no 1) 1918

showed a new appreciation of art in society based on new Western ideas. Among the articles are also two by Lü Wei in which he followed up his interest in critical standards and criteria in painting, and deliberated on the development of art.⁶⁷

In 1920 two magazines were set up which focused on the question of art education. *Huixue Zazhi*, set up in Beida in June published several of Cai Yuanpei's talks on education as well as influential essays by Xu Beihong and Chen Shiceng. *Meiyu* established in Shanghai in April the same year was published by the China Art Education Society, a nationwide society of art teachers including Liu Haisu, Wu Mengfei and Feng Zikai.⁶⁸ Much of the magazine was devoted to topics of art education, particularly Wu Mengfei's articles "What is Art Education?" which introduced current theories of art education from Europe, thus giving Cai Yuanpei's ideas more of a base on which to build on. Besides this, there were also a series of articles which began to explore some political issues of art, and which linked in more closely with the ideals of the May the Fourth Movement.

These ideas were quite lengthily explored in "The Art of Democracy" by Yu Qifan (d.o.b.unknown):

The sounds of democracy have already been popularised all over the world, in our country, apart from those who have not received education, there is probably not one person who does not speak about it. This is an idea which should come with the progress of the ages, and is really a good phenomenon. But as to what is democracy, even those who know, I am afraid only a few can answer.

Yu defined democracy as "equality of spirit and freedom of thought". He saw art as "the specific expression of the feelings of mankind, a kind of spiritual life of mankind". He then went on to say:

Art is something that cannot be lacking in humanity's spiritual life, then we should not take it as the special privilege of the upper and middle classes (humanity should never

⁶⁷ Lü Wei "The basis for Art Criticism" *Meishu* Vol 2, no4:1-3. "The Path of Art Development" *Meishu* Vol 3 no2:15-35.

⁶⁸ For a list of members and where they came from see Yuan & Hu 1992:30.

have been split into such classes, there should be no difference between rich and poor, upper and lower...) Hence the art of democracy should be called the real art⁶⁹

By the 1930s the number of art magazines had multiplied dramatically and ranged from local magazines that might only come out once to good quality long-term magazines. The result of these publications was a great introduction of Western painting, both in terms of reproductions and writing which greatly broadened the scope of influences available to include most of the up to date developments in Western art.⁷⁰ Given this multitude of new stimulus many artists felt the need to change Chinese art. For these artists there were then two basic choices: to change to oil painting, or to transform *guohua*. The latter choice already had precedents in the experiments of the Lingnan school, who were still playing an active role in the art world, but they also found a new advocate in Xu Beihong who in terms of artistic choices held that "as far as the ancient methods are concerned, maintain the good ones, revive the interrupted ones, improve those that are not good, strengthen the weak ones, and assimilate appropriate elements from Western painting."⁷¹ His advocacy of Realism and use of Western naturalism can be seen in his idea of reforming Chinese painting. In his approach to painting trees for example he wrote:

In Chinese painting, apart from the pine, willow and scholar tree, one cannot determine what all the other trees are. There are only methods invented by some people to paint different trees using different brushstrokes/dots which ultimately are not as good as obtaining a likeness from real trees⁷²

⁶⁹ Yu Qifan "Democratic Art" *Meiyu* no4, July 1920.

See also Ouyang Yuqian's (1888-1962) "Democratic Art and Aristocratic Art" *Meiyu* no1, 1920. criticises the conservatism and restricted subject matter of aristocratic life

Democratic art is free art. Those that advocate freedom break away from the teachings that bind them. What is it that binds them? No preset subject matter. Only those who can be free from bindings can tell the truth. So democratic art is free art, so democratic art is natural, Because it is natural it does not limit character development. The ancients had society as the centre, and the individual as the servant. In our democratic present the individual has his independent character and does not have to stand because of society. So democratic art is individualism.

Lü Wei "What is Art of the Masses" *Meiyu* no5, September 1920.

⁷⁰ See Kao 1972:87-89, 120-125

⁷¹ Xu Beihong "Discussing the Reform of Chinese Painting" *Huixue Zazhi* no1, 1/6/1920

⁷² *Ibid.*

Although Xu had some early works that tried for a very realistic likeness, most of his later pictures seem to show a return to brush qualities, and a compromise between observation of nature and traditional brushwork elements (fig 2.05).

In the 1920s oil painting also began to grow in maturity and. Many leading artists were given influential posts in art academies and played important roles in art education. Apart from Liu Haisu in Shanghai (fig 2.06), Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) and Xu Beihong who had both returned from France became two hugely influential figures in China's art education. Xu Beihong who had studied at the Ecole de Beaux Arts under Dagnan Bouveret and in Berlin under Kamph came to head the Fine Art Department of the National Central University, Nanjing⁷³, where he taught a realism derived from French academicism (fig 2.07). Lin Fengmian was a more versatile artist who experimented with various styles ranging from Post-Impressionism to Matisse. In accordance with his theories of art being related to life, he painted a series of moving pictures showing the suffering of the Chinese people, an early example of which is Groping in the Dark 1924 (fig 2.08). Lin was invited to head the Hangzhou National Art Academy in 1927, where he gathered round him a group of more open-minded and experimental artists.

By now, although the majority of artists were quite conservative, many were already experimenting in quite a broad range of styles. In 1931 Pang Xunqin (1906-1985) who had studied in Paris, Ni Yide (1901-1970) who had studied in Tokyo, and a number of other artists came together to form the Storm society, hoping to create a new climate in the Chinese art world, as the Fauves, Cubists, Dadaists and Surrealists had done in Europe (fig 2.09).⁷⁴ Although their art was not radical, it was nevertheless very experimental and was quite daring in the conservative Chinese art world. Aside from the Storm society a group called the Independents, formed in Guangzhou in 1933, were experimenting with surrealism.

Another interesting development was to occur with the return of oil painters to *guohua*. Sometimes this was no more than a pragmatic choice brought on by the war of Japan

⁷³ Sullivan, M. *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* London, Faber and Faber 1959.:50

⁷⁴ Croizier, Ralph "Post-Impressionists in Pre War Shanghai. The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in the Republic of China" in J. Clarke *Modernity in East Asian Art* University of Sydney 1993.

when materials became scarce. Nevertheless, the results were extremely interesting, and perhaps more so than early experiments, because they were more sensitive and not tied up to some plan to reform Chinese art. At the forefront of this was Lin Fengmian who shut himself away and painted till he had developed a personal style, which relied little if at all on traditional painting. Lin's pictures were typically of a square format and expressed a vertical recession of horizontal lines with rows of reeds. Guan Liang (1900-1985), a painter who had studied in Japan and showed great openness in learning from Western modern styles on returning to *guohua* developed a unique style of opera figures, a passion of his since his youth.

2.3 A Broader Understanding of the Burden of History

In 1930, a debate erupted about which styles of Western art were suitable for China. Xu Beihong the painter, an advocate of realism, was strongly opposed to Matisse and Cézanne. Xu Zhimo, the poet, defended them. Li Yishi (1886-1942), another painter, supplied the concluding argument which sought to mediate between the two parties.

Cézanne and Matisse's expressions are all revelations of honest natural instincts; but I still feel we should oppose their popularity in China. Because I think that under China's present circumstances, when peoples' minds have been in turmoil for over twenty years, we should really use the power of art to regulate their thoughts and console their spirit. Such works as those of Cézanne and Matisse, if they were to take hold in China would excite Chinese society. I know this disaster would not be slight.⁷⁵

The argument of the China difference, that only particular styles were suitable to China's historical situation and social reality was to crop up again and again over the years, especially over the decades when China was engaged in fighting a bitter civil war and an all out war against Japan simultaneously. Over the years this view solidified into a passive interpretation that modernism failed to take root because of "historical inevitability", and even today certain troublesome works of art continue to be swept under the carpet.

⁷⁵ Li Yishi "I Have No Doubts" *Meizhan Huikan* no8 1/5/1929, see *Youhua Taolunji* 1993:31

It is relevant to question this history because many of the arguments continued to be used in the eighties. It is also curious because in an interesting twist, at the time of this debate, the artists involved in stylistic experiments and who threatened to stir up Chinese society were in all likelihood the left-wing artists. For them, art was precisely the most effective means to alert society to social injustices and to mobilise masses to a cause. 1930 was the year when the League of Left Wing Artists was formed and the writer Lu Xun held his first exhibition of woodcut prints. The following August Lu Xun was to organise a week-long workshop of woodcut printing in Shanghai which brought together a number of young artists already working in the media, and we can see their work is both stylistically experimental and politically engaged.

The Occupation of Shenyang by the Japanese Aggressors, 18th September 1931 (fig 2.11) and People Who Demanded Resistance Against the Japanese Got Killed (fig 2.12), both by Jiang Feng (b.1910) depicted current events in a crude and powerful way. On the night of September 18, 1931, Japanese forces had launched a surprise attack on the Chinese army in Shenyang but Chiang Kaishek decided to give priority to his war against the Communists and ordered his troops to withdraw to North China. Shenyang was occupied on September 19. Opposition to Jiang's policy of non-resistance increased over the following weeks and towards the end of 1931, some 30 thousand students gathered in Nanjing demanding resistance to Japan. Chiang Kaishek ordered troops to forcefully disband the students with bullets and bayonets. It is interesting to note that whereas the first print is more of an illustration of an event, the second one really makes full use of the darkness of the composition, the roughness of the knife-cuts and the chaotic sense of panic of running people to express the horror and brutality of the action of the Guomindang, whose flag can be seen in the background.

These works are clearly more passionate and engaging than those of academic painters such as Li Yishi who were closely connected to the education. Indeed, when the latter borrowed from Western art they often "learnt" in a methodical way as opposed to a more subjective and intuitive borrowing. In this respect, Xu Beihong's academic realism

ultimately had little of the passion and urgency of the woodcut movement. Even Lin Fengmian's more creative symbolist pictures attempting to show the suffering of China seemed too abstract or showed too universal a human condition to have a direct bearing on Chinese social reality.⁷⁶

Our perception of this period of Chinese art has often been coloured by later accounts which privilege certain styles and artists, particularly realism. The lack of developments of certain schools and movements of Western inspiration such as cubism or surrealism for example has often been couched in forms of nationalist discourse, where the idea of the collective of the nation defines and limits the choice of the individual as a member of that nation and culture.⁷⁷ Yet for a time, there was a broad range of experimentation and absorption, and to get a fuller picture of the situation at the time perhaps one must go beyond high art and oil painting to look at printing and commercial art.⁷⁸ We must also put aside expectations created by later accounts of certain styles being linked to certain political affiliation.

To expand on this point, realism with naturalistic styles is often linked with artists affiliated to communism, and especially those who were later to play important roles in promoting these ideas. Post 1949 publications also very much tended to select pictures which confirmed this idea, yet from the very start, no matter how one tries to justify it, there are very obvious exceptions and inconsistencies with this view. One which comes to my

⁷⁶ Unfortunately these pictures of his such as *The Way* and *Suffering* (badly reproduced in *Lin Fengmian* Xuelin Chubanshe, Shanghai 1988) were destroyed in the war of resistance.

⁷⁷ This form of discourse was not just applied by the Communist authorities. It was also to be found in the work of Western art historians. In "Values Through Art" (*The China Difference* Ross Terril, USA 1979) Michael Sullivan wrote:

"There are limits beyond which we should not expect Chinese art to go. Even if China fully opens her doors there will be no painting the nude, because to the Chinese a 'nude' is always a naked body, an offence against personal modesty. Nor will there be any pure abstract art; not just because abstraction is Western, bourgeois, formalistic, but because the Chinese are not, and never have been interested in art whose content is just itself, and which is philosophically and morally neutral." page 317.

The importance of tracing the history of this form of discourse is to see the degree to which it has been used without being contested. This is of great importance to art in the eighties as, as has been hinted at by Lü Peng and Yi Dan, styles which fall outside the officially encouraged art are usually criticised as being merely imitative of Western art. In 1990, after the China/Avant-garde exhibition, this form of discourse was again revived to criticise and disqualify the avant-garde movement. See chapter 8.

⁷⁸ See Minick, Scott and Jiao Ping *Chinese Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century* Thames and Hudson 1990.

attention are the curious pictures of Xu Xinzhi (b.1904). Xu was a graduate of the Tokyo Art School (Xue Xiao) who on his return to China in 1929 was to play an important role in the art world as chairman of the League of Left-wing Artists and head of 'Western' painting of the China Art Academy, Shanghai. Evening Walk 1926 (fig 2.13), painted while he was still in Japan, and Unemployed 1935 (fig 2.14) are two pictures which although painted many years apart are identical in style. Given that Xu was heavily involved with the left wing artists' movement, these pictures are somewhat surprising. They do not show the turbulent social scenes of China at the time, and their simplicity of style makes them seem almost naive. Yet although at first sight these pictures may appear amateurish and seemingly crude, great care has been shown to composition, and to create a rather sombre mood. Given Xu's training in Japan and taking into account the timespan these pictures cover it seems that Xu was deliberately seeking a personal language which was quietly expressionistic and free of academic techniques. What makes this more convincing is that no attempt seems to have been made at virtuosity, no attempt at painting details, little preoccupation with Western movements or ideology. It also exemplifies a difference in attitude between the academic artists and the popularly-organised woodcut movement, in that the latter was not so much concerned with the fate of Chinese art than with the fate of China. The simplicity of the picture seems to echo his call for a genuine art, not a display of genius.

Please, look at those money worshippers, apart from their own fame and gold, apart from their own territory and their extravagant life, have they ever worked for our interests? Much less for the hardworking masses of peasants and workers. Their so-called "art for art's sake", and "painting is the expression of genius" are all no more than slogans to cheat the masses, and as for their fame and gold, hasn't it all been extorted from the masses?

Young Artists

You should see through their cheating and extortion, it is their consistent policy of the oppressing class. Hence, our art movement is absolutely not an artistic struggle of schools, but is a counter offensive against a kind of class consciousness of the oppressing class, so our art cannot but be a weapon in class struggle.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Xu Xinzhi "Before and After the Establishment of the League of Left-wing Artists", in Li Hua, Li Shusheng and Ma *Fifty Years of the Chinese New Woodcut Printing Movement, 1931-1981* Liaoning Meishu Chubanshe 1981:128

It is crucial to understand the variety of choices open to artists at the time. Lu Xun, the mentor of the woodcut printing movement, himself collected a large variety of prints in many styles from all over the world. In addition, apart from translating a great number of foreign novels, he also helped bring new theories on art to China through his translation of Hagaki Yoho's *Trends in the Modern History of Art* and the works of A Lunarcharsky and G. Plekhanov. Although Lu Xun had very strong ideas about art he was essentially an open-minded person who welcomed foreign ideas and influences. In 1934 he wrote an essay entitled "The Take-over Policy" in which he set forth his attitude towards foreign art and culture, that one should not wait until some aspects are forced upon us, but should actively take what one thinks one needs.⁸⁰ Lu Xun's very openness made him always sceptical of collective ideas and he often maintained himself somewhat apart from groups. His own reaction to attempts to limit artists' choices and to impose a form of cultural (political) orthodoxy through the discourse of Nationalism is very revealing:

"Collective mania" and "patriotic mania" means to forge a group unanimity against dissidents, to declare war against the small minority of the talented... They themselves have no special talents to boast of, so they turn their country into a double image: they elevate its customs and institutions to great height for praise. In glorifying their national essence, they naturally glorify themselves."⁸¹

In the early thirties, inspired by Lu Xun, the woodcut movement flourished and spread to other cities throughout China. During this time a great deal of experimentation occurred which played with ideas of Cubism and Expressionism, as well as other influences

⁸⁰ Lu Xun "The Take-over Policy" in *The Selected Works of Lu Xun*.

⁸¹ Quoted from Leo Ou-Fan Lee *Voices From the Iron House* Indiana University Press 1987:68.

He was similarly critical of Liang Shiqiu of the Crescent Moon Clique in his article "'Hard Translation' and the 'Class Character of Literature'":

"The thing is that Mr. Liang looks upon himself as the representative of all Chinese. So if he cannot understand these books no Chinese can understand them, and they ought to disappear from China - That is why he points out that 'this fashion should not be encouraged.'" He then asks if his opponent had really made the mental effort to read the books and if he was even capable of one, asking "though Mr. Liang offers to represent all China, is he really the best Chinese?"

which are so subjectively appropriated that it is hard to define them according to specific Western movements.

The wide variety of styles that appeared during this period was not so surprising. It was only in the 1940s that realism began to be further defined by style according to the ideology of the Soviet Union. Up to this point realism as explained by Li Hua was perceived as a force opposed to non-realism which had existed since the beginning of history. As such it was art based on materialism, which was produced for and controlled by the people. Non realism was when the rulers took power away from the people, replacing materialism with religion and superstition. As such both realism and non-realism had adopted many forms and styles throughout history, beginning with the realist trend of painting scenes of hunting and everyday life, and the anti-realist trend of using painting to depict the realm of the spirits.⁸²

The choice of styles and influences in woodcut printing therefore seemed to have remained quite free and pragmatic through the early thirties, with a great deal of experimentation. In Li Hua's art alone, we can see a great diversity of styles and influences. White Horse (fig 2.16) makes use of a sinister space similar to that of De Chirico, in which the horse, perhaps a symbol of hope, surrounded by shadows, seems to panic. Interior with Nude (fig 2.17) is a quieter, more personal and intimate scene, with a tranquil feeling. Perhaps a study work after Matisse. In 1935 he also created a series of works in a cubist style as well as works which reflect on social reality and could be influenced by Munch or the Expressionists (fig 2.18 & 2.19). Li himself expressed great admiration of the works of Munch and Daumier, however, he would soon abandon his more adventurous experiments to pursue a style more in keeping with the Party requirements.

The coming of the Japanese war in 1937, had much to do with this change of directions. Most artists felt the need to devote their art to propaganda in order to help the war effort, and the need to make art which could easily communicate with the masses required a simplification of style to cater more to their taste. Meanwhile, in Communist-occupied areas, attempts were already underway to make art conform completely to political requirements.

⁸² Li Hua *New Art Theory* Guilin 1943.

This began in earnest after Mao Zedong's 1942 Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art which we will explore in the next chapter.

The power of the Party, however did not extend uniformly throughout the whole of the as yet disunified China and still allowed room for diversity. Many Communist Party artists working throughout China then did not have so much direct contact with the central authorities in Yan'an and tended to pursue their own interpretations of Communist ideals. One such outstanding artist was Huang Xinbo (b.1915), a follower of Lu Xun. Huang had spent some time in Yunnan during the war of resistance where he made anti-war propaganda. He then settled in Hong Kong between 1946 and 1949, where he took up oil painting. The paintings he produced during this period were extremely powerful, haunting images that portrayed the plight of China in a vexing and poetic way. In Seeds (fig 2.20) the hands of a corpse reach out of the ground like the branches of a tree, suggesting the human sacrifice required by war was the beginning of a future China. Yet the picture brings out the human horror of war itself, rather than being a call to war.

Huang Xinbo's portraits are particularly moving, and bring out the result of the arbitrariness of war in its effect on children and individuals in general. The Returning Overseas Compatriot 1946 (fig 2.21) shows the despair of someone who has worked most of his life abroad earning money to build a better life at home, only to return home to find his country in ruins. Little Girl 1950 (fig 2.22) is a later picture, and one of his last oil paintings. It is a portrait of his daughter. Huang no longer painted the large dark haunting eyes of his previous pictures, yet the child's expression is not carefree, and there is a sense of apprehension about the future.

In 1948 the local Communist Party in Hong Kong met to criticise Huang Xinbo's oil paintings which did not conform in style or content to the requirements of the Party. Huang remained a Party member, and in 1951 painted one last picture in an effort to change his style (fig 2.23), but the restrictiveness of such efforts were too much, and henceforth he stuck to woodcut printing where the language of the medium allowed for a little more leeway in composition.

By 1949, the period of experimentation and diversification was over in China, not because of any "historical inevitability" but due to the intervention of the Communist Party. Many of the more experimental or modernist artists such as Lin Fengmian, Guan Liang, Pang Xunqin, Ni Yide who wanted to play a part in rebuilding China remained in the mainland. However, they gradually found out that their ideas were not acceptable, and most of them withdrew from the limelight. For other artists whose background or lifestyle were not welcome in China, such as Pan Yuliang (b.1899) (fig 2.24) and Chang Yu (b.1900) the obvious choice was to remain abroad.

Chapter 3:1942-1976

Apart from their other characteristics, the outstanding thing about China's 600 million people is that they are "poor and blank". This may seem a bad thing, but in reality it is a good thing. Poverty gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action and the desire for revolution. On a blank sheet of paper free from any mark, the freshest and most beautiful characters can be written, the freshest and most beautiful paintings can be painted.⁸³

The great Mao Zedong era we are in is also the era of the coming of heroes. A succession of outstanding men rise up from the masses and a profusion of good men and good deeds mark the era. A Lei Feng was born, and close on his heels came countless other Lei Fengs. Now a Wang Jie has appeared and there will certainly be thousands of other Lei Feng and Wang Jie types of communist fighters manifesting themselves in our battle ranks. To model oneself after heroes and learn from great people has always been the mainstay of the Party and Chairman Mao's teachings.⁸⁴

This great work [The Yan'an Talks] is an epoch-making political manifesto of our Party for remolding the Party, and the whole world, in the image of the vanguard of the proletariat.⁸⁵

Every sentence of Chairman Mao's is the truth and carries more weight than ten thousand ordinary sentences.⁸⁶

⁸³ Chairman Mao in *China Pictorial* 3/1966

⁸⁴ *Liberation Army Daily* editorial of November 23, entitled "Be good and do good by learning from good people and good deeds SWB FE/2022

⁸⁵ Chen Boda "Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Chairman Mao's 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art'" *China Pictorial* 8/1967: 6-9

⁸⁶ "Chairman Mao is the Red Sun in the Hearts of the World's People " *China Pictorial* 8/1966

3.1 "New Culture"

In this period we are to see the creation of a "new culture" and the promotion of art which was quite unlike the art that preceded it. If in the early years of the twentieth century ideas of art broadened to include new forms and ideas of Western art, during this period these ideas were to give much greater importance to "popular art", meaning both the traditional forms of folk art (such as "new year pictures") and new urban popular culture (spoken dramas, cartoons and newspapers)⁸⁷ which had also grown immensely in importance since the beginning of the century.

This change in emphasis had a lot to do with the war with Japan which had radically changed China's cultural landscape. As Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Nanjing, previously vibrant cultural centres, fell to the Japanese there began a huge westward exodus of intellectuals. The main universities reformed in Kunming as the Consolidated University, turning this southwest city of China into a major cultural centre. Art colleges and teachers also moved westwards. The Beijing National Academy amalgamated with the Hangzhou Academy and moved to Kunming and then again to Chongqing. In 1942, Xu Beihong founded the National Art Research Institute outside Chongqing. Other artists also moved to Chongqing, or established new art centres in Guilin, Kunming and other cities outside the Japanese domain.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Lu Xun Academy of Art was founded in Yan'an 1938 and this also became the destination of many artists who viewed the communists as a better hope to save China.

The move away from the more cosmopolitan centres to the isolated areas of inner China opened artists' eyes to the distant provinces which had till then remained outside the realm of Han culture. The fresh attraction of these areas gave rise to Pang Xunqin's paintings of the Miao tribes of Guizhou (fig 3.01), Wu Zuoren's (b.1908) pictures of the Tibetans (fig 3.02) and Zhuang Yan's (b.1915) pictures of the simple life of the barren North-West of China which had now become the Communist stronghold (fig 3.03). With the trek to the

⁸⁷ Hung, Chang-tai *War and Popular Culture. Resistance in Modern China 1937-1945* California 1994:7

⁸⁸ Sullivan, M. *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* London, 1959:53

West artists also became increasingly aware of the hardships and suffering of the Chinese people, and of the great danger of the threat of Japan.

The move to rural China and the realisation that to save China would need the mobilisation of China's huge rural population gave a new meaning and impetus to the efforts to democratise and popularise art, and caused a shift in the idea of art education from Cai Yuanpei's idea of beauty reconciling one to life, to a more basic effort of mobilising and educating the peasantry. This essentially meant that art began to take on the didactic role of propaganda and in turn required art forms different to those developed in the urban centres. Nowhere was this clearer than the dramatists efforts to popularise theatre.

In 1937, the Shanghai Theatre Circle National Salvation Association formed and organised thirteen theatre troops, most of which travelled to the countryside to perform, with the aim of "spreading patriotic news to the countryside and to the battlefield." Many of the plays came into difficulties as the largely illiterate audience, which was unused to this form of theatre, did not understand what was going on. Consequently, new, more direct forms of theatre arose, which had an "informal setting, a current theme, simple language, and direct contact with the populace, the intent being to instil patriotism into the people. Instead of focusing on text, these plays emphasised performance and action. Instead of resorting to fixed staging, they relied heavily on improvisation and creativity. And instead of displaying the skill of the actors, they stressed the importance of the exchange with the spectators."⁸⁹

One of the most popular of these street plays, "Lay Down Your Whip", was depicted in an oil painting (fig 3.04) by Situ Qiao (b.1902). The play was about two refugees, an old man and his daughter who make a living as street performers. The old man pressures his daughter to perform acrobatics and sing, and, angry by her poor performance, is about to whip her when a young worker steps out of the crowd shouting "lay down your whip" and reproaches the old man. The daughter defends her father's actions and tells the audience the

⁸⁹ Hung, Chang-tai *War and Popular Culture. Resistance in Modern China 1937-1945* California 1994:55

story of their misfortunes. The play ends with the worker appealing to the audience to fight oppression.⁹⁰

A similar movement occurred with cartoons and woodcut prints. In an effort to take the art to the masses, cartoonists also set up a Shanghai National Salvation Cartoon Association in 1937 and formed propaganda troops that toured the countryside (fig 3.05).⁹¹ The dispersal of woodcut artists from Shanghai occurred even earlier, when after Lu Xun's woodcut classes, woodcut artists were hunted down as Communists during the Guomindang's white terror. Many artists then left Shanghai for their home provinces and set up woodcut groups in Beijing, Jinan, Henan, Hong Kong, Shantou and Guangzhou.⁹² With the outbreak of the war many of these artists came together under the title Chinese Wood Engravers Association for the War Effort and later the Chinese Wood-Engraving Research Society.

The new left-wing print movement which had previously been used effectively to expose social evils and the misrule of the Guomindang was now also turned against the Japanese to raise the masses to the patriotic movement, such as in Consolidating Unity and Fighting the Japanese Aggressors to the End, 1938 (fig 3.06) by Liu Xian (b.1915) and instilling people with a sense of heroism as in The Last Bullet 1941 (fig 3.07), by Huang Yan (1920-1989). Cartoons also provided a freer and more vivid form to convey messages to the people. Surges of National Resistance (fig 3.08) by Cai Ruohong (b.1910) characterised the Japanese as a single ugly monster being drowned by a wave of angry Chinese people. Later, other cartoons such as Journey to the West, (fig 3.09) by Zhang Guangyu (1900-1965) made skilful use of traditional style and stories to escape the censors and satirise the Guomindang.⁹³

The popularisation of woodcuts in the Communist bases went one step further than in the Guomindang occupied areas, where images were still basically done in European derived

⁹⁰ *Ibid*:57

⁹¹ Ye Qianyu "The 'Cartoon' War During the Resistance War" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 6/1985:3 and Xuan Wenjie "Cartoon Propaganda Teams in the Anti-Japanese Resistance War Period" *Meishu* 6/1979:37

⁹² Lu Di *A History of Modern Chinese Print Art* Renmin Meishu Chubanshe 1978:77

⁹³ These cartoons were exhibited in Chongqing in 1945. Ma Ke "A Flower that Never Lost its Splendour. A Brief Discussion the Cartoon Journey to the West" *Meishu* 6/1957:35.

styles geared to a more urban audience. In Yan'an, artists began to discover that these styles were unwelcome because the country people considered them ugly and did not like some of the stylistic devices such as shading. Instead they found that the Japanese had been successfully appropriating Chinese traditional pictures for their own propaganda purposes, and they decided that this was the path they also must take.⁹⁴

The extent of the popularisation of art was not simply a matter of style but was accompanied by the growth of a new political outlook and a new understanding of Chinese culture. This new outlook was theoretically formulated by Chairman Mao in his 1940 talk "On New Democracy". Mao's definition of Chinese culture was no longer along the lines of the "national essence" of the literati, nor the new Western influenced culture of the urban intellectuals. His was to be a new culture which could be "led only by the culture and ideology of communism, and not by the culture and ideology of another class".⁹⁵ The magnitude of this change and the relation new culture was to have with "old" culture were very clearly set out in his speech:

...A given culture is the ideological reflection of the politics and economics of a given society. There is in China an imperialist culture which is a reflection of imperialist rule, or partial rule, in the political and economic fields. This culture is fostered not only by the cultural organisations run directly by the imperialists in China but by a number of Chinese who have lost all sense of shame. Into this category falls a culture embodying a slave ideology. China also has a semi-feudal culture which reflects her semi-feudal politics and economy, and whose exponents include all those who advocate the worship of Confucius, the study of the Confucian canon, the old ethical code and the old ideas in opposition to the new culture and new ideas. Imperialist culture and semi-feudal culture are devoted brothers and have formed a reactionary cultural alliance against China's new culture. This kind of reactionary culture serves the imperialists and the feudal class and must be swept away. Unless it is swept away, no new culture of any kind can be built up.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Laing, Ellen Johnston *Art in the People's Republic of China, The Winking Owl* University of California Press 1988:14

⁹⁵ "On New Democracy" *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol II*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1977:373.

⁹⁶ 'On New Democracy' 1977:369

For many years we Communists have struggled for a Cultural Revolution as well as for a political and economic revolution, and our aim is to build a new society and a new state for the Chinese nation. That new society and new state will have not only a new politics and a new economy but a new culture. In other words, not only do we want to change a China that is politically oppressed and economically exploited into a China that is politically free and economically prosperous, we also want to change the China which is being kept ignorant and backward under the sway of the old culture into an enlightened and progressive China under the sway of a new culture. In short, we want to build a new China. Our aim in the cultural sphere is to build a new Chinese national culture.⁹⁷

As part of new culture, the creation, theorisation and consumption of art would involve a delicate balance between the Party, the intelligentsia and the masses. Although new culture was to be made by the masses for the masses, the problem was that to a large degree the masses still preserved age-old values and superstitions which did not fit in with the new age. In terms of new year pictures, for instance, although their form was considered correct because it was easily understood, their content however, left much to be desired. According to Ye Qianyu (b.1907), although "old new year pictures" occupied an important part of the spiritual life of the peasants, their contents were "deluded, superstitious, counter-revolutionary and ignorant" and reflected "the ideological situation of peasants whose thought had been numbed or oppressed by feudal society until they could see no way out and hence entrusted their hopes in illusions to alleviate their hardships".⁹⁸

The role of cultural workers was not just to create new culture, but to educate the people in the new values and help them get rid of the influence of old culture. As Mao said: "The people, too, have their shortcomings. Among the proletariat many retain petit-bourgeois ideas, while both the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie have backward ideas; these are burdens hampering them in their struggle. We should be patient and spend a

⁹⁷ 'On New Democracy' 1977:340

⁹⁸ Ye also urged the peasants to accept new media of lithography and not be limited to the old media of woodcut. Ye Qianyu "From the Old to the New New Year Pictures" *Renmin Meishu* 2/1950:46

long time in educating them and helping them to get these loads off their backs and combat their own shortcomings and errors, so that they can advance in great strides."⁹⁹

Once the idea of a "new culture" had been formulated, however, the relation between intellectuals and the Party also changed. This was partly dictated by circumstances given the huge odds the Communists were up against. Fighting on two fronts, they not only needed to unite against the Japanese, but also against the Guomindang. The arrival in Yan'an of an increasing number of artists and writers in the early forties began to upset the relations with the Party. When some of the new arrivals began to criticise problems they saw in Yan'an, the Party felt there was a need to redirect their efforts towards the enemy and began to place more emphasis on the re-education of the intellectuals. This was the main problem addressed at the famous 1942 Yan'an talks on literature and art.

It is very good that since the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, more and more revolutionary writers and artists have been coming to Yan'an and our other anti-Japanese base areas. But it does not necessarily follow that, having come to the base areas, they have already integrated themselves completely with the masses of the people here. The two must be completely integrated if we are to push ahead with our revolutionary work. The purpose of our talk today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind. What are the problems that must be solved to achieve this objective? I think they are problems of the class stand of the writers and artists, their attitude, their audience, their work and their study.¹⁰⁰

The Yan'an talks not only made art subservient to politics, they also curbed the relative creative freedom artists had enjoyed. At the same time as Mao set forth the new principles for literature and art, a movement for "rectification of [unorthodox] tendencies" (整风) was begun to "integrate" wayward intellectuals. This was a thorough and undoubtedly unpleasant process for remoulding the outlook of individuals through self-

⁹⁹ "Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol III*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1977:71. See also "The United Front in Cultural Work" (October 30, 1944) Vol III:185.

¹⁰⁰ "Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol III*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1977:70.

criticism.¹⁰¹ If successful, however, the individual would not feel defeated or crushed¹⁰² , but would come around to the Party's view and again take up the enormous responsibility of helping to build a new society.

If culture was a weapon, then in the hands of the Communists it proved to be an effective one. While the Red army won victories on the battlefield, culture won the battle over people's minds.¹⁰³ In 1945, the Japanese were defeated and in 1949, the Communists won the civil war against the Guomindang. With the founding of the new state that same year, many people may have thought that the liberalisation of culture and art would ensue, and restrictions might even cease, but this was not to be. The survival of the Guomindang forces in Taiwan and the continuity of the cold war which was to pitch the Communist and Capitalist powers into war in Korea in 1950 supplied the external pressures for the party to respond to. The Party's political belief in the dictatorship of the proletariat, its belief in the Marxist development of history, and the active role of the Communist Party in bringing this about, expounded in the communist manifesto, led its leaders to embark on a huge project of wholesale social engineering which again roped culture into the political yoke.

Instead of giving greater autonomy to culture, henceforth, the rhetoric of the Party straightforwardly adopted "the voice of the people", glorifying its achievements and outlining the future tasks of the nation with a mixture of euphoria and menace. The opening

¹⁰¹ This required the subject to study Party documents and express his opinions, whereupon these would be criticised. There then began a thorough process of submission by writing self-criticisms as Merle Goldman writes: "Parroting Communist theory or the official line was insufficient; the individual had to give convincing evidence that his past behaviour was totally wrong and that his surrender to the Party's will was complete. The Party did not demand merely passive acquiescence, but insisted upon positive conversion to its beliefs. Consequently when the individual's final confession was approved and he was released from his sense of guilt, he felt rejuvenated and regarded himself, at least for a while, as a new person ready to carry out the party's orders with 'proper' zeal". Goldman *Literary Dissent in Communist China* Harvard 1967:20

¹⁰² It is hard for us to understand such conversions as being sincere. The term "brainwashing" quickly springs to mind. One tends to view such a process as a horrific destruction of personal freedom and imagine that anyone who survived would have his will broken. Yet it is also true that people went to Yan'an voluntarily and whereas they might have seen many problems surrounding them, they still had faith in Communism as the best solution for the future. In the eighties, many of the third generation were also baffled as to how so many of the older generations who had repeatedly been victimised by the system still maintained their faith in Communism.

¹⁰³ There were a number of people who had a sceptical view of the methods used by the Party and refused to compromise or be won over. The most notorious was the case of the writer Wang Shiwei, who after refusing to change his opinions after years of rectification was eventually executed in Spring 1947. See Siu, Helen F *Furrows. Peasants, Intellectuals and the State. Stories and Histories From Modern China* Stanford University 1990:15.

editorial of *Renmin Meishu* was typical of this. It began by stating the obvious joy of the Chinese people after the end of the war, but soon moved on to offer an interpretation of what the new year meant to them. "It is the first new year after the founding of the People's Republic which represents the aspirations of the Chinese people. Its arrival symbolises the well-being of the people. Its arrival announces that revolutionary struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party has already entered a new great task, to build an independent, prosperous and strong, peaceful, and free new country." The next few paragraphs announce what artists are to do to this end, then they announce an exhibition to commemorate this year and go on to define the content and styles of the works to be produced.¹⁰⁴

3.2 New China, New *Guohua*

With the founding of the PRC Chinese history had entered a new glorious era. This was to be a "new" era of socialist society, and was clearly differentiated in all statements at the time from the "old" feudal or semi capitalist-imperialist society of the preceding period. We have seen how this implied a new culture and how this culture was to be a culture of the masses. As the privileged art form of the literati, the highly educated scholar-officials of China, it is natural that with the rise to power of the Communist Party, and with the founding of a Communist nation-state in 1949, great changes would have to occur in traditional painting to ensure its survival. Although Mao Zedong had raised the slogan of "making the past serve the present" the position of *guohua* was precarious. There was even a strong opinion that this "old" art form was redundant and that "scientific" Western realism was the only suitable form to express the new society.¹⁰⁵

After liberation, it was clear that the situation of *guohua* had to be reviewed and in 1950 the first issue of *Renmin Meishu* devoted several essays to the subject. Taken as a whole, these essays covered most topics in Chinese painting and provided a thorough criticism of literati *guohua* practice. In accordance with the new political ideology, *guohua* not only needed to be remoulded, but its history had to be completely reviewed from a new

¹⁰⁴ "Make Great Efforts to Express the New China" *Renmin Meishu* 1950

¹⁰⁵ Jiang Feng, "The Problem of Using Old Forms in Painting" 1946. In Andrews 1994:23

social perspective. The artist who undertook this task was the well-known painter Li Keran who now supplied a Marxist historicist version of *guohua* history.¹⁰⁶ This article portrayed the great masters since the Yuan dynasty as corrupt narrow-thinking exploiters or useless escapists, and was all in all a most damning account of literati painting.

In order to bring *guohua* into line with "new culture" it needed to be thoroughly reformed by artists making a conscientious effort to reform their thinking and making a critical acceptance of the heritage of *guohua*.. As to how this was to be done, the artists had slightly differing approaches. Li Keran urged a return to the origins of *guohua* painting, to "going deep into life", and pointed out some of the shortcomings of some of the efforts to date, which always tended to end up as "countryside sketches" or "depictions of the border regions", subjects which were easy to assimilate to tradition as they still had a very old-fashioned way of life.¹⁰⁷ Li Hua advocated "realism" and straightforwardly dismissed the subject matter of traditional painting :

Painting should express the collective life of the 'people' and their thoughts and emotions, therefore it must be realistic. Only expressing the truthful nature and the ideological and didactic character of reality can be the highest realm of painting, hence landscape (*shanshui*) painting, bird and flower painting and "the four gentlemen" [i.e. orchid, bamboo, plum and chrysanthemum paintings] no longer have any room for development.¹⁰⁸

Shen Shuyang (1909-1986) asked artists to break with traditional ideas of 'fineness' and 'vulgarity' which reflected old class standards of beauty.¹⁰⁹ He claimed that whereas scholar officials would build pavilions in scenic spots to enjoy their beauty at leisure, peasants would find their beauty in land that could be used for planting and where there were good trees for firewood. He pointed out that seeing modern dress, electric lights, cars and

¹⁰⁶ Li Keran "On Reforming Chinese Painting" *Renmin Meishu* 1/1950. See Appendix 1

¹⁰⁷ Li Keran "On Reforming Chinese Painting" *Renmin Meishu* 1/1950

¹⁰⁸ Li Hua "The Basic Problems of Reforming Chinese Painting". *Renmin Meishu* 1/1950

¹⁰⁹ Shen Shuyang "To Reform *Guohua* one Must destroy Traditional Concepts of Fineness and Vulgarity" *Renmin Meishu* 4/1950:8

steamships as being vulgar was mistaken, along with using old place names, the old dating system and *yimin* pseudonyms.¹¹⁰

As old *guohua* came under attack, contemporary artists who took a fresh approach to creation were held up as healthy models. One of the only *guohua* artists who fit the new requirements was the self-taught painter Zhao Wangyun (1906-1977) who had become famous in the 1930s for his sketches of rural life, serialised in the Dagongbao newspaper Beijing.¹¹¹ Zhao had quite a unique artistic career. His *guohua* paintings were the first to take on the nature of illustrated reporting and became very influential both because of their down to earth treatment of subject matter and because they appeared in print. One of his greatest admirers was the warlord Feng Yuxiang who collaborated with Zhao by writing poems to accompany his sketches (fig 3.14).

His early pictures such as Tired 1928 (fig 3.13) show a great social commitment and a style that is still very traditional although hardly very impressive. By the time of his collaboration with Feng Yuxiang (fig 3.14), his painting had almost completely broken from painting tradition, seeking to depict what he saw it in a direct, unfussy and economic way, choosing subject-matter and scenery which often go against what was a conventional idea of picturesque and harmonious.¹¹² The straightforwardness of his style remained in his later pictures which unlike other artists retained a feeling of the monumentality and wildness of nature (fig 3.15).

The increased attacks on literati values and the calls for *guohua* reform not only created a great challenge to *guohua* artists, but also meant that the values of *guohua* painting itself were now no longer being voiced so much by the practitioners themselves, but more by outsiders such as Li Hua (woodcut artist) Jiang Feng (woodcut artist) and Ai Qing (poet).

¹¹⁰ These arguments were revived by Ai Qing in 1953 (Ai Qing "On Chinese Painting" *Wenyibao* August 1953. In Andrews 1944:111-118.) and continued right up to the end of the decade when Fu Baoshi (1905) called for new brushwork. (Fu Baoshi "With Politics in Command, Brush and Ink Are Different" *Meishu* 1/1959). For a full account of these arguments see Shui Tianzhong "A Review of the Debate on Innovating Chinese Painting". Shui Tianzhong 1990:50-53.

¹¹¹ Zhao Wangyun's paintings were used as an example of the healthy tendency of painting from life rather than learning from the ancients in Shi Yigong's "Making a Self-Criticism and Settling Accounts with Dong Qichang" *Renmin Meishu* 1/1950:49-50.

¹¹² *From Apprentice to Master, The Painter Zhao Wangyun*

The significance of this was that people from different fields had different reasons to be concerned with *guohua* and those with different background training brought different values to the practice of *guohua*, while artists who had been brought up within the tradition were in no position to defend it.

Precedents for a mixture of media and tradition had existed before 1949 in the form of Feng Zikai's (1898-1975) cartoons. (fig.3.12).¹¹³, but these had not the kind of blurring of distinctions that was particularly prominent just after liberation when the Party encouraged artists to produce works in popular styles. A typical example of this was The Liberation of Beijing 1949 (fig 3.10) by the cartoonist Ye Qianyu.¹¹⁴ Despite its being labelled as a *guohua* painting, there is very little emphasis on brushwork and the bright colouring and the intense activity is quite uncharacteristic of *guohua*, but very close to the feel of new year paintings.

During the early fifties, *guohua* also attracted a number of printmakers who took it up to different extent of commitment and success. In 1949, the woodcut artist Li Hua painted a series of ink-wash figures, but did not seem to want to carry on his effort.¹¹⁵ One woodcut artist who was to become hugely influential was Shi Lu (1919-1982), a member of the Chang'an School well-known for his rugged northern landscapes (fig 3.16).

With the criticism of literati aesthetics of landscape and bird and flower painting, figure painting began to emerge as the strongest form of *guohua*. Figure painting lent itself

¹¹³ Cleaning the Ear 1935 was inspired by the circumstances of an earlier cartoon of a barber's shop which Feng described in an essay. At the time Feng was staying on a riverboat, and the boatman, noticing the cartoon as he was serving Feng's supper, commented that the subject was "undignified for a famous artist. The forthright wife of the boatman advises Feng to scrap the cartoon and draw some beautiful flowers instead. One objection the cartoon raised among Feng's host was that it almost looks as if the barber is poking into the customer's ear." Feng found the subject even more intriguing and proceeded to make a new cartoon.

Christoph Harbsmeier *The Cartoonist Feng Zikai. Social Realism With a Buddhist Face* Oslo, Norway 1984:159

¹¹⁴ Each medium had its new requirements, and these sometimes encouraged artists to take up *guohua*. This was the case with the cartoonist Ye Qianyu whose very perceptive and humorous cartoon figure 'Mr Wang' had gained great popularity in the thirties (fig 3.11). Now in 1950, he explained his decision to change to *guohua* being partly because an artist with his shortcomings could not shoulder the political and ideological burden put on cartoons. Ye admitted that although he had read some Marxism Leninism he was unable to find a new philosophy of life and world view, but it is also probable that he somewhat lost interest because cartoons took on a didactic or aggressive quality during this period and lost much of their humour. Ye Qianyu "From Cartoons to *Guohua*, A Self-criticism" *Renmin Meishu* 1/1950:44

¹¹⁵ Li Hua *Huaji*

most to thematic painting and also easily adapted to the realistic drawing formulas, but its predominance was also greatly linked to changes in the education system. After liberation the communists had the task of reforming the academies, which in the South were still full of nationalist teachers. The Beijing Academy had already adopted a Soviet style department, and was already staffed by communist artists.¹¹⁶ One such example was the Beijing artist Jiang Zhaohe's (b.1904) Telling Uncle our Grades 1953 (fig 3.17), which used outline drawing for the clothes, and shaded three dimensional depiction for the face.

The emphasis on Western drawing in figure painting also had a great influence on the Zhejiang artists. The situation was ironic in that whereas the academy had a strong tradition in bird and flower and landscape, figure painting had all but died out. To remedy this situation the academy kept on a number of the 1953 graduates to study and teach colour and ink painting.¹¹⁷ These styles developed mostly within the academy then spread out through their influence and through graduating students such as Liu Wenxi (b.1933) from the Zhejiang Academy in 1958 to become vice director of the Xi'an Academy in 1984. Liu Wenxi was in many ways an ideal party artist who lived very simply, and spent much of his time in the poorer areas of Shaanxi province living among and sketching the peasants of the area (fig 3.18). His teaching eventually gave him a big following among the students which developed into the Xi'an school of figure painting.

The efforts made to reform *guohua* in the early fifties took the initiative away from the more traditional artists, and to a certain extent also marginalised them. Yet the question of national heritage (in this case the more traditional *guohua* of *shanshui* and bird and flower

¹¹⁶ The situation in Shanghai and Hangzhou was different. The Shanghai Academies were closed down. In 1949, Jiang Feng was sent to head the Zhejiang Academy and introduced a radical reform programme. The academy was renamed the East Campus of the Central Academy and the *guohua* and oil painting faculties were amalgamated to conform with Beijing. Students and faculty had to Study Marxism and Mao Zedong thought and were encouraged to take part in the lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers. In oil painting modernist styles were discouraged and artists were made to draw realistically from plaster casts. In *guohua* painting only the outline and colour painting, a style close to folk art, was encouraged, while *shanshui* and bird and flower painting was not taught, leaving the most prestigious *guohua* painters out in the cold. See Julia F. Andrews *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China 1949 -1979* University of California Press 1994:45-49

¹¹⁷ The main artists of what became known as the Zhe school of figure painting were Fang Zengxian (1931), Zhou Changgu (1929-1986) and Li Zhenxian. A contemporary study of figure painting styles singles out two other distinctive schools of figure painting, that of Huang Zhou (1925) and that of Cheng Shifa (1921). See Liu Guohui *An Exploration into Figure Painting in Chinese Ink and Wash* Zhejiang 1991

painting) continued to be very important to China's leaders. This was especially true of Zhou Enlai who, in the 1953 Congress of Literary and Art Workers made a speech to the effect that national heritage and tradition should be studied and developed.¹¹⁸

This change somewhat redressed the balance between tradition and reform, something that was reflected in the improvement of the situation of *guohua* at the Zhejiang Academy after 1953.¹¹⁹ In 1954 painting department split into *caimohua* (ink and colour), oil painting and printing departments, the former headed by Zhu Jinlou (1913). In 1957 the *caimo* department was changed to the *zhongguohuaxi* with Deng Bai (1906), a *gongbi* bird and flower painter as head. It was further subdivided into landscape, figures, and bird and flower.¹²⁰

Yet what was the actual situation of the department which Zhu Jinlou took over? Zhu remembers that in 1956, there was only one *shanshui* teacher, Pan Yun (1906-1985), at the Zhejiang Academy. Pan Yun's paintings such as The New Appearance of the Mountain Village 1955 (fig 3.19) at the time were done very much in a popular style, showing few traces of literati tradition. The bird and flower department, however, was in a better position. with Pan Tianshou (1897-1971), Zhu Lesan (1902-1984) and Wu Fuzhi (1900-1977) and Deng Bai. The former three painters were all highly regarded and painted in the *xieyi* style. Pan Tianshou was a highly educated scholar who painted large pictures in strong calligraphic brush outlines. Zhu Lesan (fig 3.20) was also an important painter as he had learned to paint in a bold *xieyi* style with his uncle the famous painter Wu Changshuo (1844-1927).¹²¹ Despite resuming teaching, these bird and flower painters were kept pretty much in the background on a national level, their pictures hardly ever published.

¹¹⁸ Zhou Yang also made a speech. Andrews 1994:119-120

¹¹⁹ The academies became the most likely place where tradition could be passed on. Although a painting research centre was founded in 1953, headed by Huang Binhong and a Painting Institute was also established in Shanghai, they did not take on new students. Outside the academies also, the market for traditional *guohua* paintings had all but disappeared and many artists changed professions or turned to illustrations or cartoons. To alleviate the situation, the government also set up some cooperatives for painting souvenir fans. The financial situation of such artists however was dire and their work was reduced to repeatedly churning out approved fan designs.

¹²⁰ Zhongguo Gaodeng Yishu Yuanxiao Jianshiji:108

¹²¹ Zhu Jinlou "The Main Founder of the Teaching Methods of New Zhejiang Landscape Painting - Gu Kenbo's Teaching Method and Anecdotes" in *Zhongguohua Liushiwunian* 1993:243

Meanwhile, in 1956 Zhu Jinlou was asked to find another teacher for *shanshui* painting to rebuild the traditional sector in the academies. The trip took him to Shanghai where looking through paintings he came across a painting by Gu Kenbo (1905-1979). Zhu invited him to the Academy. Gu Kenbo's paintings (figs 3.21, 3.23 & 3.24) were quite different from Pan Yun's. Gu's training was at first completely traditional, starting by copying the paintings of Tang, Song and Yuan painters, as well as the Four Wangs. Later he moved on to Shen Zhou and Gong Banqiao. His landscapes up to the time of entry to the ZAFPA, such as Mi School Landscape 1954 (fig 3.21) show both his education in and reliance on tradition, but were to undergo a big change thereafter. Later, Gu Kenbo was joined in the landscape department by Lu Yanshao (b.1909).

The emphasis on using Western drawing techniques in *guohua* was also to have a major influence on landscape painting after 1949. The first experiments were made by the Central Academy teachers, Li Keran, Zhang Ding (b.1919) and Luo Ming (b.1912) who took a sketching trip to the South in 1954 and spent a month sketching based at the Zhejiang Academy. The results were exhibited at the Central Academy in September, and such expeditions were subsequently mounted by other artists and became an integral part of the painting curriculum.

The idea of sketching from nature was not entirely new. The traditional painter Huang Binhong had often sketched from nature, as had Zhao Wangyun. However, this time the drawings were to be done closer to the subject. Whereas Huang Binhong's (1865-1955) sketches had retained a linearity which conformed with his brushwork style, but helped him form new combinations from the ancients, these new experiments were to be much closer to Western sketching. This was especially so with Zhang Ding's paintings that were done with outline and colour washes similar to watercolour paintings. Li Keran's work was more interesting as it sought to capture the likeness of the landscape without relying on traditional brushwork formulas and compositional conventions (fig 3.22).¹²²

¹²² This gave his sketches a very different feel from his deliberately composed pieces such as his Ten Thousand Crimson Hills 1964. It is worth remembering that some political paintings were also performance pieces when artists would be invited to paint before Party officials, and so relied on much more conventional compositions.

In Hangzhou, Gu Kenbo's painting was also very influenced by this experimentation. His painting Zhan Qi Feng 1959 (fig 3.23), has an unusual composition with more sketchy lines, less conventional tree brushstrokes and an unusual cutting off of the trees at the bottom. Nevertheless, the line between a sketching feeling and a finished painting is sometimes an odd compromise. At times the sense of composition seems observed and unconventionalised, but the brushstrokes are as usual Plum Trees and Stones 1960 (fig 3.24). These new departures were welcome changes from the overformalised Qing dynasty landscape painting, while the continued emphasis on brushwork did not cause a clash with traditional aesthetics. The years between 1957 and 1965 gave these traditional artists a chance to continue their experiments and pass on their knowledge to a new generation of artists. However, during the Cultural Revolution traditional painting all but disappeared, and most well-known painters were persecuted.

3.3 The Theatre of Reality. The Total Popularisation of Art

If in the period between 1942 and 1949, there arose a new relation between the intellectuals and the masses, in the late sixties an effort was made to eliminate this boundary altogether.

The approximation of the role of artists and art consumer was one of the topics discussed in the Yan'an Talks when Mao suggested art should develop in successive phases of popularisation and raising of standards. Popularisation meant disseminating art to the masses, learning from the masses; raising of standards meant that professional artists should help the masses to produce and improve artwork. In effect, this was to help put the intelligentsia on the level of the masses, and raise the masses standards to the level of the intelligentsia so that eventually the distinction would cease to exist.

The process of approximation took the form of educational exchange between the two groups which continued until 1950, and even later. Artists would create a work of art with a specific audience in mind (the broad masses of the people) and the latter in turn would be taken to the exhibitions to discuss and criticise the pictures. This process would enable the

masses to criticise the artists, while their own ideological level would be heightened through group discussion, and the guidance of party cadres.¹²³

This exchange between artist and audience was also to become part of the process of creation. Once the artist had made a draft of the picture he was encouraged to seek opinions from the audience on how to improve it. "The Creation Process of The Tragic Incident of Jiangyan and Self Criticism", is an account of the positive results of such an action.¹²⁴ The picture was about the execution of the labour leader Lin Xiangqian by the warlord Wu Peifu.¹²⁵ The artist, Li Tianxiang (b.1928) expressed his difficulty in creating the picture since he had never witnessed any similar incident. When he had finished a first draft of the picture (fig 3.25) he sought advice from friends and subsequently discovered that although he had expressed the noble, heroic quality of the martyr, he had failed to infuse the masses surrounding him with the appropriate reactions.¹²⁶ As inheritors of Lin Xiangqian's revolutionary spirit they should also be portrayed as defiant and not as merely outraged and compassionate bystanders (fig 3.26).

The exposure of the creation process also had an important function of providing work models for other artists to emulate. In an earlier article the traditionally-trained artist Huang Jun (b. 1914) described a similar experience in portraying a current event (fig 3.27).¹²⁷ Huang explained he was inspired to paint a picture of Mao at a great state event and presented the problem of creating the picture as a mainly practical one. How was he going to paint his picture of Mao if he had not been present at that particular conference? He surmounted this difficulty with the help of friends who supplied him with a photograph and descriptions of the event. Yet having done a draft he felt the composition was not lively enough and decided to add in a row of four youths bearing flowers, to "capture the liveliness"

¹²³ For an account of such a procedure see He Shuo "The People's Art Army is Growing" *Renmin Meishu* 4/1950

¹²⁴ Li Tianxiang "The Creation Process of The Tragic Incident of Jiangyan and Self Criticism" *Renmin Meishu* 4/1950

¹²⁵ The incident occurred in February 1923. See Wou, Odoric Y. K. *Militarism in Modern China. The Career of Wu P'ei-fu 1916-1939*. Australian National University Press 1978:224

¹²⁶ He also decided to read up on the history of labour strikes and the history of communist martyrs, to better understand the significance of the event

¹²⁷ Huang Jun "How I Painted Chairman Mao in a New Year Picture" *Renmin Meishu* no 2/1950:49

of the event. He was then told that Mao did not look right because his eyes had nothing to focus on. Afraid to alter the image of Mao in case it might lose its resemblance, he decided to add the foremost youth to coincide with Mao's line of vision.

The relationship between the artists and the masses was to take a new turn during the Great Leap Forward (1958) when a new artistic phenomenon emerged in the rural areas: a popular movement for creating mural paintings. The example of careful, tidy mural paintings on themes of promoting production appeared in the sixth issue of *Meishu* 1958 (fig.3.28), several months later the movement had spread all over the countryside and much freer and more humorous murals and paintings appeared all over (figs 3.29 & 3.30). The effect such paintings had was to raise production. One account told of a small village of about one hundred households which had difficulty in raising pigs, averaging less than one per household. After a mural was painted accompanied by slogans on village unity the villagers were able to raise altogether more than three hundred and fifty pigs, three times more than previously. With this new enthusiasm for artistic creation every household became filled with poetry and painting and "everyone wanted to be an artist".¹²⁸

The craze for popular mural painting modified the relation between the amateur and professional artists. In one move, the main art consumer had also become the main art producer. Furthermore their works were full of vitality and fulfilled the social function of art better than the art of the professional artists. As Li Qun (b.1912) wrote:

The works of the peasants, compared to our "fine and detailed" paintings are naturally coarse. However, when could our works ever compare with the moving role theirs play in life and production? We are not running down the role of any good works of our experts, all of them, even including bird and flower paintings, serve the people and are all needed by the people, but compared to the rapid and combative character of the role Pi county peasant works have in production, speaking of my own creation, it only puts one to shame. This is really because they truly know life, love life and love the production communes, with the inevitable result that the works are closely united with reality. For this reason they have

¹²⁸ "In Every Household There is Poetry and Song, In Every Household There is Painting" *Meishu* 9/1958:28-29. The title comes from a poem which continues: In every village the Red flag is raised, the Great Leap Forward in creation, everyone wants to become an artist.

really raised art works to the height of being "propaganda weapons" in the real sense; making the art works really accord with the demand that the superstructure serve the base.¹²⁹

The official rise of peasant painters then challenged the status of professional artists. Now, professional artists not only had to learn class standpoint from the masses¹³⁰, they were in danger of becoming redundant since the emergence of this new kind of artist who was closer to the ideal communist artist predicted by Marx:

Millions of artists who have really been born out of the working class have taken to mural painting, this is a great event in human cultural history, movingly proving the correctness of the prediction Marx made about the development of communist art over one hundred years ago: "under certain social conditions, every person is an outstanding artist...in communist society, there will be no special artists, only working people who paint."¹³¹

The emergence of the peasant painter at this time was no coincidence, but was closely tied to the whole ideology of the Great Leap Forward and with Mao's vision of China in particular. The Great Leap Forward marked a break from the Soviet model of development which promoted urban industrialisation. Instead it was an attempt to shift the socio-economic centre of gravity from the cities to new rural communes. These communes would become the new basic unit of social structure and were to "combine industry, agriculture, trade, education, military affairs and integrate government administration with commune management." Its aim was "the gradual diminution and final elimination of the differences between rural and urban areas, between worker and peasant and between mental and manual labour, and the way to the gradual diminution and final elimination of the domestic functions of the state".¹³² Communisation not only envisaged a new form of society, but also the

¹²⁹ Li Qun "Talking About the Function of Art" *Meishu* 9/1958:17

¹³⁰ At the art academies, during the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 many professional artists were sent to the countryside for re-education, (during which time they also took the opportunity to teach the masses), there was a greater emphasis on the more practical styles of art, with the inauguration of propaganda painting departments (fig 3.31), and students also began to be admitted according to class background and political outlook, rather than artistic ability.

¹³¹ "Promote the Great Bloom in Art Popularisation" *Meishu* 9/1958:1

¹³² "Resolution on Questions Concerning People's Communes," Sixth Plenary session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP, 10 December 1958. New China News Agency, Peking, 18 December 1958. New China

emergence of "new", "all-round" men. It would be a society where "everyone will be a mental labourer and at the same time a physical labourer; everyone can be a philosopher, scientist, writer and artist".¹³³

The failure of the Great Leap Forward put art creation back on a more conventional path and safeguarded the position of the professional artist. As a result the period between 1960 and 1965, when works of high aesthetic quality were produced, has been regarded as a high point of Chinese communist art. Yet this period of relatively high economic and aesthetic prosperity was by no means seen as positive by Mao. He saw the allowance of a degree of freemarket production as a betrayal of the ideal of communism that paved the way for the return of class inequalities and class exploitation. Mao, insistent on his view of mass communisation, began to lay the groundwork to make a comeback. He labelled the ideology of the Party in the early sixties as "revisionist" and "reactionary" as opposed to his own "revolutionary" approach. He then launched the Great Proletariat Revolution, to clear away such erroneous tendencies.

The importance of culture in this movement is self-evident. The aim of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was "to revolutionise people's ideology and as a consequence to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in all fields of work." The existence of revisionist culture, however, could sabotage the efforts to revolutionise ideology and so a thorough purge had to be effected to get rid of such influences. This purge in Peking Opera where "top counter-revolutionary revisionists" used "old Peking opera to serve a counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalism" was carried out by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing.¹³⁴

In Jiang Qing's subsequent reform of Peking opera, efforts were made to eliminate all the old ideology, and characters, to make an old form completely suitable to contemporary reality and to convey the message of revolutionary ideology. In doing this, she felt no

News Agency, Peking, 18 December 1958. See *Current Background*, no 542:7-22 in Meisner, Maurice *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*. University of Wisconsin Press 1982:142.

¹³³ Meisner, Maurice *Mao's China* 243 in Laing *The Winking Owl* 30

¹³⁴ "Hail the Great Victory in the Revolution of Peking Opera" - Editorial of Red Flag no6, 1967 in Chiang Ching *On the Revolution of Peking Opera* Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1968.

reluctance to get rid of all old gestures, costumes, conventions of traditional opera, to merge it with forms imported from the West, such as ballet and western instruments. The result was a new form that had little to do with the tradition but was indeed more "revolutionary" (fig 3.32). The lessons learnt in this reform were quickly applied to other fields of art. Such an example is Song in Praise of the Revolution (fig 3.33), mass callisthetics in seven parts, performed at the Second national sports meet in 1965. This performance was said to be a direct outcome of the revolutionisation of China's dance and drama and was held up as an example of "how sports could serve proletarian politics".¹³⁵

During the Cultural Revolution art entered a new and more extreme phase of popularisation. On the one hand, most well-known artists were attacked, on the other hand everyone was encouraged to produce art. To facilitate the creation of artworks, new, easy to grasp conventions and models were popularised. In composition, there were the three prominences (derived from revolutionary opera): give prominence to positive characters, among the positive characters give prominence to the heroic characters, among the heroic characters give prominence to the most heroic character. In terms of colouring pictures were encouraged to be "red, bright and shining". To further popularisation, little books of "model" pictures were published. As a result artistic production could be carried out by any citizen of China, although the results were often quite stereotyped (fig.3.34)

If this art seems no more than propaganda it because the nature of art as propaganda during this period was both overt and encouraged. The correctness of the message took precedence over aesthetic considerations, the goal of art was not to be beautiful, but to transform society. This is especially clear in the depictions of contemporary heroes. Real people and real events were taken by artists and transformed into glorified depictions (fig 3.35 & 3.36).¹³⁶ These glorified versions then became models for emulation. The novelty of hero-emulation in communist China has been explained as:

¹³⁵ "'Song in Praise of Revolution'-The Second National Sports Meet -Mass Callisthetics in Seven Parts" *China Pictorial* 1965.

¹³⁶ "A Heroic Collective Armed With Mao Tse-tung's Thought" *China Pictorial* 6/1967:32-37. This gives an account of the battle and reproduces photographs of the heroes in ordinary life as well as a glorified cartoon version of the battle.

(1) the careful ideological control of the hero characterisations, action and language by which the ideological "message" is conveyed; (2) the use of nationwide campaigns so that *all* children (and adults) are emulating the *same* hero at the same time; (3) the degree of intensity and active participation encouraged.¹³⁷

The art of the Cultural Revolution has been largely ignored both in China and the West. Croizier wrote of some Westerners feeling "aesthetic revulsion" towards the "extreme vulgarisation of art", and also of the visual arts during this period having "secondary political importance and little aesthetic value".¹³⁸ Nevertheless, in terms of what it set out to do it was both unique and successful. Bearing in mind that the most important thing was social transformation, the formula creation/emulation blurred the distinction between art and reality (fig 3.38 & 3.39). (New ideals were created and emulated, and so they were also realised to a certain extent). The total popularisation of art meant that everybody was creating and internalising these values at the same time. Creation ceased to be the making of artworks but culture as a whole was transformed into the everyday performance and celebration of history: the era of the coming of heroes.

¹³⁷ Sheridan "The Emulation of Heroes" *The China Quarterly* No 33 1968:47-72

¹³⁸ Croizier, Ralph "Chinese Art in the Chiang Ching Era" *Journal of Asian Studies* 38 (Feb 1979):303. He also wrote "Perhaps there is a direct connection between the fervour of a revolution and the power of its political art. In the latter stages, anyway, the Cultural Revolution often seemed to be an induced or stage-managed revolution".

Chapter 4: After Mao

"Looking backwards" is in order to better "look forwards", letting us do the best we can to avoid falling into the same traps or taking the same wrong turns in the road ahead, to expose the shocking deceits, schemes, ignorance and tragedy before people, awakening them and making them think deeply". (Li Xianting)¹³⁹

1976 was a momentous year in Chinese history. In January, premier Zhou Enlai died. During the Qingming festival a crowd assembled in Tiananmen square to pay homage to him burst into a spontaneous demonstration against the Gang of Four and was brutally suppressed in what became known as the "April Fifth Incident". In September Mao Zedong died. On November 6th, the Gang of Four who had ordered the suppression were arrested. The Cultural Revolution had turned into chaos and had destroyed China's economy and ruined the lives of millions. Mao's death meant the death of a "god" whose promised utopia now turned into an empty illusion. With the dream and the figurehead gone, the Cultural Revolution was exposed as a nightmare.

4.1. Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping

The April Fifth Movement was significant for showing the widespread popular support premier Zhou Enlai enjoyed. Zhou, the second most important man in the leadership, had always stayed loyal to Mao, but nevertheless stood for very different things. More moderate and conciliatory in nature, Zhou was known for his concern for the intellectuals. In a time when the Party stressed ideology over expertise and even the Party hierarchy had been attacked, Zhou was an important symbol of order and hope. Indeed, in the art world, Zhou had personally intervened in the plight of older artists who had been sent to the countryside. A number of them, including Li Keran were recalled to Beijing and commissioned to paint large murals for hotels and public buildings. Zhou was also seen as a focal point of resistance

¹³⁹ Li Xianting "The Painful Lesson of Modern Superstition - The Depiction of a Typical Environment in Feng" *Meishu* 8/1979:38

to the Gang of Four and became the target of the mass campaign "Criticise Confucius and Lin Biao".

Associated with the figure of Zhou was that of Deng Xiaoping who had resumed a position in the leadership in 1973. Deng, a long-term pragmatist had been a critic of Chairman Mao in 1960 and had also been partly responsible for the subsequent economic plan introducing greater free market measures, reasons for which he was purged during the Cultural Revolution. When Zhou died, Deng, already a strong candidate for the leadership, was left in a vulnerable position and briefly lost his position between January 1976 and July 1977.

On Mao's death, his appointed successor Hua Guofeng became chairman. Subsequently the Gang of Four were arrested. Hua took some credit for this, but although he condemned the Gang he was not against the Cultural Revolution. His outlook has been described as "an unlikely combination between mid 60s radicalism and mid 50s economics".¹⁴⁰

In the power struggle that was to ensue between Hua and Deng, the re-evaluation of the April Fifth Movement and the Cultural Revolution became a crucial bargaining point essential for Deng in eliminating ultra-leftists from the leadership and in absolving the CCP from blame. It was therefore a highly sensitive issue involving the whole fabric of the Party hierarchy. The key politician's agenda was never fully opened and the process of change was a constant negotiation between individuals at all levels of the hierarchy. The results then filtered out into concrete policy changes or simply publication of opinions that would previously not been possible.

In the art world concerted criticism of the Gang of Four really got underway when the exhibition commemorating the downfall of the Gang was held in the National Art Museum (18/02/1977). The Gang was further criticised at the National Artwork conference held in February. Articles from the conference published in *Meishu* called for purging the influence

¹⁴⁰ Macfarquhar, R. (edited by) *The Politics of China 1949-1989* Cambridge 1993:317

of the Gang;¹⁴¹ support for Zhou Enlai and reviewing the case of the Black Paintings exhibitions;¹⁴² exposure of the Gang's self-interest and false concern for the workers.¹⁴³ They also criticised the artistic conventions of the period, especially the "three prominences".¹⁴⁴ How to depict leadership figures was another topic that was thoroughly debated in a conference held at the Central Academy. Li Tianxiang who was one of the participants observed: "[those pictures] make me think of the portraits of emperors and kings throughout the ages, depicted bigger and higher than anyone else- The feudal classes' way of praising their leader".¹⁴⁵

So long as criticism was only focused on the Gang, however, little change was visible. Nevertheless, criticism slowly began widening its scope. In 1978 an article was published stating that "emancipation of thought" could only be achieved "through thorough criticism".¹⁴⁶ Months later a criticism appeared on how the Gang had controlled the five main cultural periodicals, and another one called for revoking the inaugural editorial of *Meishu* in 1976.¹⁴⁷ So far the targets had been the Gang, but the reversal on the verdict of the April Fifth movement was a major reassessment of political responsibility for the surviving sympathisers and attitudes within the hierarchy, and of the struggle between the Mao/Zhou ideals ie. reds and experts. The first issue of *Meishu* in 1979 announced the reversal of the verdict on the April Fifth Incident and reproduced pictures painted at the memorial during the demonstrations, and photographs of the artist at work.

¹⁴¹ Lian Dazhu "The Gang of Four's Involvement in the Crimes in the Applied Arts Must Be Exposed and Criticised" *Meishu* 2/1977. Also Xia Xiangping "Expose and Criticise the Gang of Four's Crimes in Suppressing and Destroying Military Art and Engaging in Anti-Army Disruptive Conspiracies." *Meishu* 2/1977.

¹⁴² Shen Roujian "Premier Zhou Will Live Forever in the Hearts of Hundreds of Millions of People. - Expose and Criticise the Monstrous Crimes of the Cronies of the Gang of Four Using the Term 'Black Paintings' to Attack Zhou Enlai." *Meishu* 2/1977

¹⁴³ Yan Fengqiao "Behind the Concern for Worker Art" *Meishu* 2/1977

¹⁴⁴ Li Jinyou "Criticising the Three Prominences" *Meishu* 2/1977

¹⁴⁵ "Art Workers' Glorious But Arduous Historical Task - A Summary of Speeches on the Modelling of the Figures of Leaders, made by Art Workers Invited to a Conference by Our Publication" *Meishu* 2/1977.

¹⁴⁶ Shen Cheng "Only By Thorough Criticism can we Have Thorough Emancipation- Records of the Conference of Central Academy Teachers Exposing and Criticising the 'Black Line Autocracy' in Literature and Art" *Meishu* 1/1978.

¹⁴⁷ Editorial Criticism Group of *People's Cinema, People's Theatre, People's Music, Art and Dance* "How the Gang of Four Made Use of Five Art Periodicals for Conspiracy in Literature and Art" *Meishu* 3/1978., and Xin Bingmao "The 1976 Inaugural Editorial of *Meishu* Must be Criticised" *Meishu* 3/1978.

The power struggle between Hua and Deng was to go on through the Third Plenum when the scales started shifting in Deng's favour. It was only in 1980, however that Hua resigned and the verdict on the Cultural Revolution was reversed. Meanwhile, change in the artworld was not forthcoming. Many pictures continued in the previous conventions although interpretations of events did get progressively bolder as the situation allowed. In early 1977, for instance a picture by Ai Xuan (b.1947) portraying a girl protecting the wreaths of Zhou Enlai was published in *Meishu*. The twelfth issue carried a similar picture by Yin Guoliang (b.1931), but now the girl was lying dead on the ground, and blood was splattered on the photograph of Zhou Enlai.

By the time these pictures appeared considerable changes had occurred in the artworld education system. The Central Academy which had been virtually disbanded by Jiang Qing and turned into the October First Academy, gradually began taking back teachers from the countryside. In 1974 the academy resumed admitting students although these were selected according to class origins, only accepting "sons and daughters of workers peasants and soldiers who had suffered greatly and nursed deep hatred". The BA Degree was shortened to three years. An "open-door schooling" system was adopted where students (and teachers) went to Huxian county in Shanxi to study from peasant painters.

The real changes came after the downfall of the Gang of Four. In the following two years the Academy reinstated 126 teachers who had been attacked during the Cultural Revolution, rehabilitated 44 people persecuted during the anti-rightist campaign, denied the existence of an anti-party Jiang Feng clique and restored his leadership position. Chen Pei was readmitted to leadership and cadres attacked in the 50s and 60s were rehabilitated. In September 1977 the Cultural Bureau changed the Academy's name back and organised a transition group. Despite the seemingly new liberalism, the ideals of the academy remained conservative, as Jiang Feng, its dean emphasised:

If we put aside reflecting the life of the people, expressing people's aspirations which are the mainstream works of art of our movement, and if they don't get their due respect, then the direction of socialist art will become daily more blurred and even deteriorate...Another

example, there are some young artists doing oil painting, who in art blindly worship the Western modernist schools advocating that both realist and modernist school's path can lead to the truth, demanding they should be treated equally without discrimination, even thinking that the inevitable development of art is from the figurative school to the abstract school... if we lower our guard and do not criticise such upside-down arguments which blur our artistic direction, then the problem will be critical (Jiang Feng)

In 1979, the art world, which had been quite quiet, sparked into life and there were several intense debates. May 1979 issue of *Meishu* published an article by Wu Guanzhong (b.1919) entitled "The Formal Beauty of Painting" an attempt to free painting from its political content allowing it to exist on a basis of its own unique characteristics - form.¹⁴⁸ Artists who had been commissioned to paint murals in Beijing airport began experimenting with semi-abstract geometrical designs, and a mural (fig 4.01) by Yuan Yunsheng (b.1938) scandalised the Party with its depiction of nudity.¹⁴⁹ In the Academies, students were also beginning to explore new paths and formulae. Chen Danqing (b. 1953) was one of the first to break away from realism towards naturalism, from the soviet style painting towards other Western schools. In the Spring of 1979 the word democracy had even crept into *Meishu*. This no doubt was connected to the freer atmosphere coinciding with the Third Plenum when there was a great popular movement for writing big character posters on what became known as the "Democracy Wall" and when there was a whole spate of quasi-official exhibitions held in Beijing's parks (See chapter 7).

The articles that appeared in *Meishu* however were not as liberal as they might at first appear. Jiang Feng's article "Democracy Must be Fought For, It Must Not Rely on Charity" marks a shift since the Third Plenum in emphasising Zhou Enlai's line on literature and art, rather than Mao's Yan'an Talks. Nevertheless, his idea of democracy was that intellectuals should be able to speak their minds under the freedom given to them by the Party: "The Party has given us democratic rights, we must use them, any opinions should be courageously and painfully spoken".¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ The whole debate which lasted several years is analysed in Lü Peng and Yi Dan. Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Meishu* 11/1979

¹⁵⁰ Jiang Feng "Democracy Must be Fought For, It Must Not Rely on Charity" *Meishu* 2/1979:7

If the implications about the relation between the Party and the people and democracy were not clear enough, this was fully spelt out in the article which followed: "In Implementing Democracy the Crux Lies with the Leadership".

Without democracy there is no development in art. Artistic democracy is no good without political democracy. In the last decades we have lost the most basic democratic rights, so our literature and art development have not taken off. Whether the Premier's talks can be accomplished and implemented or not lies in whether or not we have democracy, particularly political democracy.

Whether the art world can implement democracy lies in the leaders. One should give consideration to the characteristics of our art profession, not interfering too much in artists, not making such dead restrictions, giving them a little creative freedom, giving them fewer frameworks. Some comrades fear talk of freedom, as if any task of freedom is connected with bourgeois liberalisation. Actually, our freedom is not the same freedom as that which they demand. No need to fear. Chinese artists will never go so far as Western artists, we must believe the absolute majority of our artists are good [people]. In creation, what to express is a question of theme, how to express is a question of form and style. In theme, so long as it is advantageous to socialism and the people it can be expressed...¹⁵¹

4.2. Exhibiting Change

During this time, the exhibition system resumed its role as an important part of the Party's ideological machine. Many exhibitions took the form of national exhibitions to commemorate historical events and political figures. These exhibitions would have the function of turning reality into a glorified myth, presenting standardised views of an event on a huge (and nationwide) scale. They would also require the participation of important and aspiring artists, and the process of participating and getting approval for a painting was an essential part of the self-censorship and continuous reeducation of official artists. This was also the case with the most prestigious exhibitions for artists in China. These took the form of national art exhibitions where prizes would be awarded to outstanding artists.¹⁵² Despite the

¹⁵¹ Wang Qi "In Implementing Democracy the Crux Lies with the Leadership" *Meishu* 2/1979:8

¹⁵² The National art exhibition was held once every five years. The 6th NAE was held in 1984, the 7th in 1989 and the 8th in 1994. Apart from that National Print exhibitions were held every two years, and the First National Oil Painting Exhibition was held in 1987

greater thematic and stylistic variety in these exhibitions, the aspect of artists' self-censorship can be taken for granted, the criteria for awarding prizes were dependent on the political atmosphere at the time.

Although these nationwide exhibitions continued to play the role of seeking to galvanise the new Party direction, they were now faced with a new challenge. After the change in leadership, the Party itself was reviewing its own performance on an unprecedented scale. Going back to as early as 1957, it described the Anti-Rightist Campaign as "overblown", the Great Leap Forward as "misconceived" and the Cultural Revolution as a "decade of disaster". These verdicts allowed (and even called) for a new pictorial version of events which allowed a certain amount of criticism of the Party as it had existed before 1979.

In December 1979, one such exhibition was held in the China Art Museum to commemorate the martyr Zhang Zhixin.¹⁵³ Zhang was a forty-five year old woman official of the Liaoning Party Propaganda Department, who refused to admit her guilt and defied the gang of four until she was executed in 1975. Unlike previous national heroes, especially those who emerged during and since the Great Leap Forward¹⁵⁴, Zhang was not a hero (like Lei Feng) whose story was concocted or embellished. Nor was she a hero specifically portrayed as a model to be emulated and so the specifics of her deeds and how to depict them were not developed or focused. Whereas some pictures focused on her steadfast character and her struggle for truth (e.g. Fighting for the Truth, Pledging Her Life to Defend the Party), others such as the Song of the Loyal Ghost (fig 4.03) by Luo Zhongli (b.1948) depict her heroism as an apotheosis, showing her being borne up by two ghosts in front of a monument to heroes.

There were other works however, which focused on criticism of the Party as much as on Zhang Zhixin's martyrdom. Where is the Party? (fig 4.04) by Zhang Guilin (b1951) shows the sleeping, enchained Zhang Zhixin raising her hands in her dream towards the sun above the clouds, where there is the hammer and sickle of the communist party. Untitled (fig

¹⁵³ Zhang Wang "The Martyr Flower Blooms and Lives Forever - Remembering the Martyr Zhang Zhixin" *Meishu* 7/1979:5-7.

¹⁵⁴ See chapter 3.

4.05) by Guo Changxin (b.1941) is an even more daring criticism, drawing attention to the fact that many of the people who persecuted Zhang Zhixin and who continue to occupy positions of power now pretend to have been her good friends.

Such politically sensitive interpretations continued to appear in other national exhibitions in the early eighties. The "30 Years Since the Founding of State" Commemorative Exhibition (10/2 to 10/3/1980) included a number of works by young Sichuan artists who dealt with the subject of the Cultural Revolution, the April 5th 1976 Incident and the sending of rusticated youths to the countryside.¹⁵⁵ These included Snow, an Unknown Date in 1968 (fig 4.06) by Cheng Chonglin (b.1954), Spring Has Arrived, by He Duoling (b.1948) and Spring (fig 4.07) by Wang Hai (b.1956). This trend continued in the Second National Youth Exhibition (21/12-22/2/1980) in which controversial works like My Father (fig 4.08) by Luo Zhongli, Goodbye Little Road (fig 4.09) by Wang Chuan (b.1953) were exhibited.¹⁵⁶ This exhibition also included works by other South-west artists which had greater stylistic diversity (figs 6.12 & 6.13).

New approaches to historical topics were not restricted to painting, but also appeared in literature and other forms of art. Among these works, "Scar" a short story by Hu Xinhua which explored the personal tragedy and meaninglessness of the Cultural Revolution gave name to this new trend.¹⁵⁷ Overall this trend was manifested in a shift from depicting leaders or models to depicting ordinary people, and of depicting events through personal experience. In cartoons, there was Self Mockery 1979 (fig 4.11) by Liao Bingxiong (b.1915) directed at "political animals" like himself who had failed to make a stand during the Cultural Revolution and had fallen victims of their own work.¹⁵⁸ In cartoon stories, Feng was the adaptation of a short story about a young couple during the Cultural Revolution who

¹⁵⁵ A selection of pictures to be entered in the exhibition appeared in *Meishu* 12/1979. A list of the prize-winning works appeared in *Meishu* 4/1980 and 5/1980

¹⁵⁶ *Meishu* 3/1981

¹⁵⁷ Published in the *Shanghai Wenhui bao* on the 11th August 1978.

¹⁵⁸ Published in *Meishu* 4/1979:37, together with the essay "My drawings Are Deep Fried." Cartoon subsequently shown in the 6th National Art Exhibition

sacrificed their basic morality, feelings and love for each other to fight for the ideals of "class morality", "class feelings" and "class love" (fig 4.10).

"Scar" art played a large role in criticising Party ideology, and especially in painting, in subverting the conventions of realism. "Realism" in China was a form full of conventions. From the three prominences to the creation of "heroes" and leaders, the iconology and content of the works were all well thought out to give maximum impact. The mere lack of these conventions in some early eighties pictures such as Chen Danqing's (b.1953) Tibetan series, and Wang Hai's Spring created problems in how to "read" the pictures and understand their political message.

Although many of the changes may not have been politically intentional, the humanism and politically misplaced sense of duty felt by artists contrasted radically with Mao period art. In retrospect Gao Minglu analysed the perception of reality in Cultural Revolution art as "emotional reality" (情感现实), in other words, "it was "not life reality (since it was non rational), not visual reality (because it required beautification), and not eternal reality in religious sense (because it excluded the experience of solitude and pain). It did not want to see non-emotional aspects of objective environment and events."¹⁵⁹ By contrast Wang Chuan's Good Bye little Road (fig 4.09) by focusing on the individual's experience of an event brings out such feelings of disappointment, uncertainty and solitude which threw a personal perspective on a historical reality, as he wrote:

She did not have the courage to say goodbye to her past life. She was expecting the future to call for her. She was deeply tormented by past and present, without discovering joy and happiness. Experiencing a profound inner excitement, I felt I had a duty to give priority to an artistic consciousness of social morality and justice, to make a passionate defence of those youths who sought a happy destiny and were unfortunate like her.¹⁶⁰

This enthusiasm to explain textually the content of the painting, typical of "realist" art in some cases also brought out the political naiveté of these students. Luo Zhongli's picture

¹⁵⁹ Gao Minglu 1991 25

¹⁶⁰ Wang Chuan "Hoping She Will Take the Big Road" *Meishu* 1/1981:46

Father (fig 4.08) was a daring, powerful work. Done on a huge scale, in a photorealist style, the picture was potentially troublesome because it did not idealise the peasant and because it was done on a scale usually reserved for leaders. As was noticed to begin with, the picture did not look like a picture of a peasant of the "new" China,¹⁶¹ so in order to indicate that he was indeed one, the artist was advised to paint in a ball point pen tucked behind his ear to show his literacy. The picture was duly exhibited and was a great success until the artist wrote a letter published in *Meishu* which described the hard life of the "dung keeper" who had inspired the picture, and Luo's desire to "cry out" for him.¹⁶²

Whereas both these pictures already broke out of the conventions of "realism", Cheng Conglin's Snow seems to be an attempt to portray history within the conventions, but is equally effective in its subversiveness. Depicting a day in the Cultural Revolution at the end of a fierce battle, the picture keeps the conventions of the three prominences. The triangular foreground of the picture leads to the centre where the heroes are to be found, and all around are figures watching the event and reacting to it. In this case, however, the "hero" is a girl of the defeated red guard faction still looking defiantly at her opponents, whereas around them, the observers are not involved in the action, but are passive spectators. This has the effect of bringing out the absurdity of the event, while the attitude of the spectators and the inclusion of children among them does not draw us into the event but makes one observe it from a sober distance.

The attitude of pragmatism of Deng's regime, and the necessity to review history made the art of the beginning of the Deng era immediately different to that of the Mao era. The chaos of the Cultural Revolution affected so many artists, that in fact when most of China's top artists reemerged they were for a short time on the same platform as unofficial and amateur artists. The revision of history also at times blurred the distinction of what was officially sanctioned. Whereas the Party still maintained an effort to determine artistic

¹⁶¹ Li Xianting told me that some critics compared such depictions with the "high [minded] great, and all-round" figures of the Cultural Revolution and described them disparagingly as "small [minded], bitter and old".

¹⁶² Luo Zhongli "A Letter From the Maker of My Father" *Meishu* 2/1981:4-5. See Appendix III. For further discussion of this painting in English see Wang Yuejin "Anxiety of Portraiture: Quest for/Questioning Ancestral Icons in Post Mao China" in Liu Kang and Tang Xiaobing (editors) *Politics, Ideology and Discourse in Modern China* Durham and London 1993:243-272.

themes, these were now often more economic rather than political, focusing on the new policies of the 'Four Modernisations'. Nevertheless, the rules of the game for artists in the eighties was significantly different, and it enabled them to portray a far more critical image of society than had previously been possible, and to deconstruct the orthodox ideology of art, including interpretations of "national art".

4.3 Denationalising Oil Painting

Should oil painting be nationalised? In recent years everybody has been in favour of its nationalisation. An artwork without national style is soulless. The more national character it has, the greater its universal significance.

How should it be nationalised? Some say, first master it, then change it. Some point out there can be many methods of nationalisation, such as assimilation, transformation, evolution or fusion. Some advocate natural change - let history complete the task; some advocate a conscious promotion of nationalisation; others advocate the simultaneous learning of oil painting and *guohua*.¹⁶³

In 1979 the question of how oil painting could be made more Chinese again became a topic of discussion. The first article to appear on this subject raises some questions as to the goals and methods of the "nationalisation of oil painting" and proposes some guidelines for its achievement. Zeng Jingchu (b.1918), the author, advocates the active nationalisation of oil painting through a process of "fusion". This was a process previously suggested by Lu Xun who held that the ultimate aim of fusion was to "develop new styles". Styles that would borrow from Western painting, but would not resemble the originals. Zeng proposes that to do this one must learn from the West but with clear limits and objectives:

We should also study on the one hand and explore on the other. At the same time we must also make certain choices. We cannot do a wholesale takeover, much less take other

¹⁶³ Zeng Jingchu "A Modest Proposal on the Question of the Nationalisation of Oil Painting" *Meishu Yanjiu* 3/1978:34

things to replace our tradition. We should pay more attention to those things which suit the tastes and habits of our nation"¹⁶⁴

To achieve the delicate balance between learning from abroad and maintaining national character Zeng suggests: One, that oil painting and Chinese painting should be studied simultaneously, but that one should begin by learning the latter so that it will take a deeper root. Two, that one should study things which are compatible with Chinese tradition including: other schools of Eastern art; post-renaissance drawings; Impressionist colouring; the line drawings of Post-Impressionist masters; the light contrasts of Dutch paintings.

The views expressed by Zeng Jingchu were a reevaluation of the attitudes towards the importation of oil painting which had reached an extreme after the Sino-Soviet split in 1958 culminating in a radical campaign to nationalise oil painting, mostly by applying techniques of traditional Chinese painting. The article that followed Zeng's, written by the oil painter Ai Zhongxin (b.1915) who had himself taken part in these experiments, criticised the narrowness of that campaign:

The nationalisation of oil painting is also a kind of evolution. We cannot understand nationalisation as emulating national traditional painting. I do not oppose the use of certain *guohua* techniques in oil painting. When well used they can also change the appearance of oil painting, giving the masses a certain intimacy. There were also quite a few such paintings exhibited in 1958. Some were quite good, but there were some bird and flower and *shanshui* paintings mimicking the effects of Chinese painting which made the appearance of different types of painting identical, and cannot enrich our hundred schools. These [oil painting and *guohua*] are two completely different types of painting. Each has its own language. Imitating [each other] is meaningless.¹⁶⁵

Ai Zhongxin emphasised the need for each art form to maintain its strong points. His opinion on how national oil painting styles should be developed stresses the need for modernisation. "Foreign art has the problem of making foreign things serve China, national art has the problem of making the old serve the new. To link the two problems, foreign things

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁵ Ai Zhongxin "A Further Discussion on the Nationalisation of Oil Painting" *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1979:1-5.

also need to serve the new. Without nationalisation, modernisation can easily tend to a pursuit of antiquity."¹⁶⁶

Ai Zhongxin began his article calling for tolerance and diversity, but his standpoint and rhetoric remains rooted in the leftist discourse of revolutionary art. His espousal of the idea put forward by Zhou Enlai that nationalisation equals popularisation defines the limits of his concept of modernisation:

There are all sorts of nationalisation. The abstract school considered themselves to be the most modern, and even proclaimed themselves time-transcendent. But their group was the smallest and most of them were blind followers, going with a fashion. The rise of the abstract school has its social reasons which we will not go into, but there is a popular theory, especially in the Western art world that holds that in *guohua* since the Yuan dynasty, especially in literati painting you could already grasp the elements of abstract art. They abstracted each dot, each line, each element in art forms from the image and enlarged them to an infinite degree and look upon them as expression above art which is actually the psychological expression of spiritual emptiness. This formal game of doing the same old thing in a new guise runs counter to popularisation. Their slogan of universality is also incompatible with nationalisation.

Lenin warned us 'Our opinions on art are not important. Among millions of people, art's contribution to several hundred or even several thousand people is unimportant. Art belongs to the people, it must have a strong foundation among the lowest level of the broad masses of workers. It must be understood and loved by the masses. It must summon up artists from the masses and let them develop."¹⁶⁷

The unfolding of this debate took place in the period of liberalisation following the eleventh plenum (described in 4/1). This was a time when there were strong criticisms of the Cultural Revolution, when the art world was trying to free itself of the influence of leftist domination and there was a movement to free art from political criteria so that it could be judged using the "laws of art itself". It was under these circumstances that a conference was held in Beijing by the Beijing branch of the CAA and the BOPRA. The first among the

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

published speeches was Zhan Jianjun's (b.1931) "The slogan 'Nationalise Oil Painting' is best forgotten".¹⁶⁸

Zhan Jianjun rejected the idea of actively promoting the nationalisation of oil painting on the grounds that this process would occur naturally and that "so long as there are differences between nationalities cultural differences will inevitably arise". The article emphasised the need to learn from other cultures and states that this slogan had mostly been used as a stick to keep out foreign things.

Soon afterwards, in April 1981, another conference was held in Shanghai and reached much the same conclusion, stating that the meaning and methods of "nationalisation" were unclear and that "especially in 1958, a narrow understanding had meant it was understood as 'Hanisation, classicisation and popularisation', making oil painting tend to turn into *guohua*, folk painting or graphics [*tu'an*]".¹⁶⁹ The article also claimed that because of its lack of clarity, nationalisation had been used as an indiscriminate cudgel to attack artists, and that in reality it did not conform to the laws of art itself and was not helpful for creation under the hundred flowers slogan.¹⁷⁰

The rejection of the slogan "nationalise oil painting" was a move to free art from the influence of leftist criteria, to establish a more pragmatic and tolerant atmosphere for creation, and to broaden the scope of Western art styles which could be drawn on for creation. The premises which would make this possible were the rejection of a single set of criteria for defining the nation, and the realization that national character is always subject to change and development, and that these processes cannot always be controlled.

These arguments were put forward by the art theorist Sun Jin (d.o.b. unknown) in his article "National Character, National Form, Nationalisation".¹⁷¹ Sun agreed that it is natural for art to have national character but also insisted: "National style must be subject to change. That is to say that special national characteristics, national spirit and national customs

¹⁶⁸ Zhan Jianjun "The Slogan 'Nationalise Oil Painting' is Best Forgotten" *Meishu* 3/1981

¹⁶⁹ Shi Xuanqing "Absorbtion, Fusion, Diversification -Shanghai holds a Conference about the Question of the Nationalisation of Oil Painting" *Meishu* 9/1981:48-49.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁷¹ Sun Jin "National Character, National Form, Nationalisation" *Meishu* 9/1981:50-52.

themselves are continuously changing, and are also influencing, being influenced by, fusing with and assimilating other nationalities."¹⁷² The expression of national character in his art, he argued, was the "natural" influence of society and culture, not the result of applying "absolutely correct" theories such as "combine East and West", "nationalise", "serve politics".¹⁷³ Furthermore, "nationalisation", meaning "the making of all different aesthetic habits, ideas, feelings, and artistic styles ... in society transform in accordance with a single standard of a certain nation's customs and special characteristics", was problematic in a multinational state such as China: "The great community (*datong*) of the world of art is a kind of illusion. Even now, in our country alone there are over fifty nationalities, which one would it be proper to change towards?"¹⁷⁴

The rejection of the slogan "nationalise oil painting" was extremely significant, and this significance was primarily political. It took the power of determining national identity away from the Communist Party and allowed the individual artist to choose what attitude to adopt towards foreign art. Suddenly a whole new spectrum of artists who did not adopt a narrow attitude to national identity became acceptable models: Byron, who although he was a Scottish poet wrote about the liberation of Italy; Picasso, who was deeply influenced by African art; Kandinsky, who fled Russia but managed to be a remarkably successful artist.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Sun himself, however, is also quite influenced by the discourse of nationalism. He gives Xu Beihong's picture Moving the Mountain as an example of the "national character of oil painting" because one could feel its "firm and tenacious national spirit and unyielding patriotic moral courage". Obviously, this is not the result of any particular national character, but a legacy of identifying national character with "heroism" (Moving the Mountain was one of Mao's favourite stories since it exemplified the victory of will power over insurmountable obstacles.)

¹⁷³ The objective value of national character in some of the early experiments are also quite dubious. Dong Xiwen, the model of nationalising oil painting, for example was an admirer of Western modern art and his work has been described as having the "obvious intention" to combine traditional art with Western modernism (Shao Dajian "Chinese Art in the 1950s: An Avant-garde Undercurrent Beneath the Mainstream of Realism".) His success lay partly in the way he explained his innovations by giving them a nationalistic and heroic interpretation. With regards to his picture The Red Army Does Not Fear The Hardships of the Long March, for example, he says the basis of the form in the picture is derived from woodcut prints and then explains. "The main focus of this work, the contrast between the extreme physical pain and hardship and the firm high spirits of the red army soldiers, and between the most difficult living conditions and the soldiers' spirit of optimism. The feeling that the deep blue gives people is that of suffering, whereas the black lines are the most resistant and determined of all the existing colours, and integrate the combination of hardship and willpower." (Jin Zhilin "It is China, it is Our Great Country" *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1991)

¹⁷⁴ Sun Jin "National Character, National Form, Nationalisation" *Meishu* 9/1981: 52

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

4.4 New Directions, New Problems

The Chinese Artists Association held its Fourth Representative Meeting in Ji'nan from the 6th to the 11th of May 1985. The Chinese Artists Association is supposed to be an unofficial organisation of artists but which in reality acts as a mouthpiece and consensus-forming operation for the Ministry of Culture. This meeting brought together 468 artists out of the 543 representatives to review the association's work since 1979, the occasion of the 3rd Representative meeting, and to discuss the possible directions for art. Wu Zuoren made the inaugural speech. This was later followed by a five-year progress report delivered by Hua Junwu (b.1915), a vice-chairman of the Artists Association.

This report was the main speech at the conference and was extremely important because it defined the Party's current attitude towards art and let artists know in what direction they were expected to develop. The overall tone of the report was very positive. Giving an overview of the current situation, Hua said:

Since the 3rd Representatives Meeting, there has emerged a stable, united and lively political appearance and democratic atmosphere over all of China, providing good social conditions for the flourishing of art professions. The vast majority of artists emancipated their thinking, strove to get rid of the shackles of "leftism", and courageously broke many taboos in creation and theoretical research. They achieved clear successes in the aspects of opening up of new areas of subject matter, the profundity of reflecting real life, and exploration of artistic form.¹⁷⁶

Hua's speech carried a strong criticism of leftist influence on art and emphasised that China was now experiencing a new period of prosperity which brought a new challenge to China's artists:

At present China is in a new era where a great turning point is happening in social life. The "CCP Resolution on reforming the economic system" points out: "The reform of the economic system will not only give rise to great changes in people's economic life, but will

¹⁷⁶ Hua Junwu "Make a United Effort to Open up a New Appearance in Art" *Meishu* 7/1985:8

give rise to important changes in people's lifestyle and spiritual state." Facing the historic mission the age has brought forth, what kind of reaction should we have? How should the whole undertaking of art accommodate to the demands of the age? These are questions every artist faces and which need to be re-examined and re-understood.

These were questions that also confronted the Party which needed to disassociate itself from the Cultural Revolution and guide people in making the transition to a new social reality. Hua answered these questions by advising artists to keep a finger on the pulse of change and to keep their art in step with the times. He urged artists to throw themselves into the powerful current of change, to get to know the people of their age, understand their needs and aspirations, and maintain close relations with them. To do this, Hua said, the artist needed to personally experience and understand the profound significance of these changes and use his artist's vision to observe and record life and to develop a sharp power of observation, feeling and understanding of life. Without this basic skill, he said, "we cannot talk of any genuine artistic creation".

With these words Hua had effectively laid down the parameters of art, and hence the parameters of artistic freedom. He had emphasised the old communist tenets of keeping a close connection with reality and the masses and then proceeded to stress the ideological understanding of reality by reiterating the need to raise ideological standards by diligently studying Marxism Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

Having laid down the ground rules Hua changed tack to talk about the complexity of art as a spiritual labour and the need for freedom in artistic creation. He quoted Lenin on the need to guarantee individual creativity and personal preference saying that it is "absolutely necessary to guarantee the vast world of having individual creativity and personal preferences, and the vast world of having thoughts, fantasies, images and content". Hua then reemphasised the topic of artistic freedom by quoting a speech of a Central Committee member, Hu Qili, a few months previously at the fourth representative meeting of the Chinese Writers Association, stating that: "Creation must be free. That is to say that the artist must use his own head to think, he must have full freedom over choice of subject-matter,

themes and methods of artistic expression," and that "just as creation should be free, discussion should also be free".¹⁷⁷

This section of Hua's speech was most crucial as it set the atmosphere for artistic creation. The Party had laid down the parameters for art and artistic freedom, and had at the same time had called for artists to think for themselves, to create and discuss freely. This was bound to give rise to some problems. Not only were artists likely to begin to question these parameters, but they were likely to transgress the aesthetic and thematic guidelines of the Party.

These guidelines were explicit in the evaluation of artworks in Hua's speech. In ideological approach they had hardly changed from the Mao period, requiring artists to have a close relationship with the masses and a personal experience of the life of the masses. In terms of style, however, the attitude was now much more open, emphasising the laws of art itself and diversification of styles:

The individualisation of art language, the diversification of form and style, and especially the artists' spirit of originality, not only conform with the laws of artistic development, they also conform with the people's daily growing demand for diversification. We should encourage artists to create their own unique styles, guiding them under the preconditions of serving the people, in carrying out free exploration of artistic form. As to failure in the exploration process, we should not come down on them with a stick, but should allow failure.

The acknowledging of the aesthetic properties of art was an important concession which immediately gave art a great appearance of diversity and "modernity". What was more significant, however, was the attitude towards content. Although the Party had rejected thematic determinism, the "four modernisations" crop up as a constant theme in Hua's article, and art serving the four modernisations is put forward as a new ideal:

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*:11

After the Third Plenum our nation has realised a great historical turning-point of shifting the focus of work to the path of building the four modernisations, to win honour for our socialist homeland, to contribute to realising the socialist modernisations, has become the ideal of the people of the new era. Broad masses of artists personally took part in this great reform. The new people constructing the four modernisations, vast social scenes full of vitality, have made them feel the atmosphere of the new era, from which they have drawn their creative source.

These aspects were reflected in the work of the 6th National Art Exhibition (NAE). The exhibition, held in November 1984 consisted of 3723 works in fifteen different categories, displayed in nine venues in different cities of China. It was hailed as a "milestone in socialist art".¹⁷⁸

Looking at the works as a whole one immediately feels that the works are generally of a less political nature than previously. This is apparent in the way the usual political themes are treated in a more human, down to earth way.

Portraits of leaders are still much in evidence. There are quite a few pictures of rehabilitated leaders and historical figures but there are no prize-winning portraits of China's new leader, Deng Xiaoping. There are several pictures of Chairman Mao, but he is no longer idealised, shown alone, or in a dominating physical position as was typical during the Cultural Revolution. The Pioneering Years (Bronze award) by Fu Lin (b.1941) shows Mao in the company of a peasant (fig 4.12). The setting is informal, and the peasant who is riding a donkey is actually looking down on Mao.

The graphic conventions of the Cultural Revolution have almost entirely disappeared. In depicting the military the subject matter has totally shifted from heroism and self-sacrifice to comradeship and human values. One shows a soldier writing home to his concerned mother, the other a group of soldiers taking a break and exchanging experiences (fig 4.13). The overwhelming majority of pictures depicting modernisation do not depict huge industrial sights teeming with model workers but focus on the new life of the countryside. The pictures are often set in a more natural context, the protagonists are going about daily life, reference

¹⁷⁸ "A Milestone in Socialist Art" *Meishu* 10/1984.

to prosperity is often given in a subtler, less utopian manner (fig 4.14). Even pictures of industry tend towards quietude and romanticism (fig 4.15). The overall theme is not so much political as a celebration of life. Much of the imagery refers to spring (fig 4.16), and the most typical figures to emerge are youths, the future (fig 4.17).

The great novelty of the 6th NAE was the recognition that art should be created according to its own laws. This opened up a new field of experimentation. Among the gold awards was Zhan Jianjun's oil painting Tide (fig 4.18) where a young worker is shown against a semi-abstract dynamic background of line and colour. The background gives the idea of the dynamism of the four modernisations without burdening it with specific objects to signify this, whereas the figure by contrast, a young man not too young but not too old, his feet on the ground and a confident posture expresses China's youth having the future in their own hands.

The degree of abstraction and formalism varied considerably. Among the silver awards, Wu Guanzhong's *guohua* Spring Snow (fig 4.19) uses long brushstrokes, areas of poured ink and ink-splashes to create a quasi-abstract landscape which is then given a context by the small houses added at the bottom of the picture. Wu's award was significant since he was the main artist to argue for the abstract quality of art, and to refute the criticism of "formalism".¹⁷⁹ Formal experimentation sought inspiration from both outside and inside mainland China. Many artists began to incorporate elements from cliff paintings and ethnic art into their work. This development also opened up the possibility for ethnic minority artists to draw on their own aesthetic heritage to create new "national" modern art (figs 4.21 & 4.22).

The positive appearance of the exhibition very much reflects the limits put forward by Hua Junwu, rather than the emancipation of thought. This is hardly surprising since the

¹⁷⁹ The publication of an album of works rejected from the exhibition gives a good idea of the limits to which abstraction was acceptable. Cai Qiliang's picture A Break of Affection (fig 4.20) depicts a large circle with a slice taken out looking as if it is about to swallow up a small red circle. The circles and ink patterns within them are reminiscent of experiments in the *guohua* media in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The colour and imagery however suggest a political analogy: an individual breaking away from the Party. Selection criteria were contested in other areas. Shen Jiawei criticised the way Yu Xiaofu's painting I Knock Lightly at the Door, a portrait of four famous artists, was rejected because the figures looked "too ugly". Shen Jiawei "A Brief Discussion on Ugliness" *Meishu* 6/1986:10-13.

exhibition began to be organised during the Anti-Spiritual pollution campaign, and was opened only a short time after Hua's speech.¹⁸⁰ Signs of the emancipation of thought were forthcoming in another exhibition that opened shortly afterwards.

The Advancing Young Chinese Artists Exhibition (AYCA), was held in Beijing in April 1985. It was held to commemorate world youth day and its creative theme was 'participation, development and peace'. The over 600 works in the exhibition created a different atmosphere from the 6th NAE. They had more forceful and critical imagery and showed less optimism. Nevertheless, they also had a more purposeful approach than those exhibitions of the early eighties. Reviewing the exhibition, Ma Ke (b.1931) wrote:

In their works it is already very hard to find the bluffing, exaggeration and lies influenced by ultra left-thought. Instead they tell the truth and show real feelings...It is hard to find the perplexed hesitation of recent years, the looking back and sighing, and all the predicaments of individuals sunk into their small universes. Instead they face the age and face the future, and change the unhappiness and resentment brought by the ten years calamity into the strength to go forward and transform them into a desire for new life.¹⁸¹

This new combative spirit showed itself in tackling large socially significant themes in a potentially controversial manner. The political subject matter of the mistakes of the Party crops up again in April 5th 1976 (fig 4.23) by Zhang Jun (b.1954). This time however the picture does not depict individual martyrs or show the people as victims and sacrifices, it focuses on their large number, their unity and active participation. The technique used was

¹⁸⁰ The "emancipation of thought" was first put forward during the 3rd Plenum of the 11th CCP. Some of the responses it gave rise to, however, did not conform to the Party's wishes, and the Anti-spiritual Pollution was launched to curb these tendencies. The preparation of the 6th National Art Exhibition was a process which involved local branches of the artists association, and members from the main branch meeting with artists to view their sketches and discuss their work. One of the more delicate tasks they had to perform was to motivate reluctant artists to produce work while ensuring the work conformed with the criteria of the Party. The elimination of spiritual pollution was the subject of several articles in the preparation phase of the exhibition ("Welcome the 6th National Art Exhibition" and "Eliminate Spiritual Pollution, Work For the Success of the 6th National Art Exhibition, The Chinese Artists Association 1983 Work Conference Held in Suzhou" both in *Meishu* 1/1984). A later article (Qing Zhou "Correspondence on Creation Questions" *Meishu* 4/1984) emphasises the limit to which the campaign should be taken. It states that it should not go against the policies put forward at the 3rd Plenum of the 11th CCP, it encourages artists to continue to emancipate thought, and urges reluctant artists to show their work.

¹⁸¹ Ma Ke "Our Hope Lies in Them" *Meishu* 7/1985:16

also very forthright and direct. The immediacy of the event is brought to the viewer not through reworking the material through the media of oil painting, but by pasting together many photocopies of the event and letting the images speak for themselves. In addition to this a splash of blood was added to the picture as a reminder of the massacre, and a small mirror was placed in one corner to reflect the viewer as a "participant" of the event. This work was awarded first prize.

The willingness to face the age undermines the optimism of many of the images and gives a more personal and pensive interpretation to certain themes. Spring has Arrived (fig 4.24) by Yuan Qingyi (d.o.b unknown) deals with a popular theme which has connotations of liberalisation, one hundred flowers blooming, prosperity. The treatment however is most unexpected. The picture shows a man in his home environment, a cold grey room, a table with a book and an apple. Spring is only visible through a distant window. The result of this imagery is to draw a distance between the environment and the feeling of spring, between the expectations of spring and the uncertain present reality.

The works in this exhibition were altogether more intellectual than in 6th NAE. What we learnt about the artist from the paintings in the 6th national art exhibition was very limited. The subjects in the paintings were to a certain extent new stereotypes, simple, hardworking, and content. By contrast what comes across from the pictures in the AYCA exhibition are the thoughts, social concerns and personality of the artists which are often daring in both content and form.

One of the most interesting and mischievous pictures in the exhibition was In the New Era, Revelation of Adam and Eve (fig 4.25) by Meng Luding (b.1962) and Zhang Qun (d.o.b.unknown). The picture explores the theme of progress. In a Dali-like composition and style, the picture shows a female figure advancing through and shattering a succession of time frames in the sky, bringing with her a platter with the forbidden fruit. Immediately behind her stand two huge naked figures of Adam and Eve, each clutching an apple, and beside them at the edge of the picture are two huge "feudal" doors. The picture began with the simple desire to break the taboo of nudity in painting. The idea of using Adam and Eve

gave a justifiable excuse to paint the nudes, and the analogy would read as having eaten the fruits of enlightenment mankind had broken through the feudal period to emerge in a new era. According to a friend, however, the feudal gates were only painted in to bypass the censors.¹⁸² Without the gates, the imagery could be read as Chinese people eating the fruit of enlightenment and moving beyond Maoist dreams of paradise.

One of the aspects remarked upon about this exhibition was the greater diversity of works in terms of subject matter, style and form. The 'emancipation of thought' took art away from direct centralised Party control. Art became more autonomous, its production was no longer solely to serve politics and convey the ideas of the Party. This development considerably changed the rules of art creation. On one hand the responsibility for production -choosing style, form and content- now belonged to the artist. On the other hand controls on art became more localised and pragmatic.

The new diversity also brought into the open the great variety of views on the current situation and future development of Chinese art. Much of the focus was on interpreting "tradition", giving it continuity and finding a way to make it relevant to the present. The other half of this equation was how to react to and appropriate Western ideas on modern art. In a sense this was an exercise in negotiating identity in terms of art, yet the issues artists had to negotiate went far beyond choosing between Chinese and Western tradition: They involved a critical examination of their cultural and political legacy, coming to terms with their recent past and actively promoting personal opinions about art, Chinese culture and the future.

¹⁸² Xu Bing "How Do They Think? How Do They Paint?" *Meishu* 7/1985:47

Chapter 5: The Jiang-Zhe Area

The provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu have long been important cultural centres of China. These areas have been a stronghold of "literati" culture. Nanjing was a prominent cultural centre since the Eastern Jin period (316-420) and Hangzhou became the capital of the Southern Song dynasty. Hereafter, although the capital was to move North again, this area has remained a strong cultural and intellectual area whose painting has dominated the history of Chinese art up until the present. The educated scholar elite from these provinces always had a strong representation in government and when excluded from government posts many took solace in painting. This area continued to play an important part in the twentieth century. The seat of the Guomindang government was in Nanjing. Nearby Shanghai was a hive of intellectual ferment and communist ideas. The first meeting of the CCP was held in Shanghai and a nearby city called Jiaxing. It was also in Shanghai that Lu Xun held his woodcut printing workshops in the thirties. In terms of art, these areas continued to have strong influence and were home to some of the most important art institutions in China: The Zhejiang Academy of Art (ZAFA), now renamed the National Academy of Art, and the Nanjing Academy of Art.

In the eighties, as centres of both traditional painting and intellectual ferment, this area was to be one of the most vital centres not only in giving continuity to tradition and importing new ideas, but also in the highly critical approach of artists to these activities. The area of Zhejiang and Jiangsu is then perhaps the best starting point to examine one of the most important aspects of the Chinese art world in the eighties: the conflict between tradition and change.

5.1. Gu Wenda, Li Xiaoshan and the Predicament of Guohua

Sisyphus once again hauled the rock up the hill, trance-like he felt a power different from before. He felt incomparably light. The rock still rolled down the slope, but this time he no longer gave any thought to the tumbling boulder. In an instant his eyes spied to the side of the hill a sharp light projected round the mountaintop. Like Abraham looking back at Haran, he felt a sudden fear and then threw himself into a panic-stricken wild joy:

"Bright moon hung in the sky, a dark floating splash, the sound of wind all around, cold light as if flying, empty solitude misted over, cold air like water, where is the boat headed?

As far as the eye can see, cloud curtains drop low, like a herd of white elephants, then again like a solemn temple, without a light, in chaotic space between heaven and earth, where is the boat headed?

The ocean end, the deep clouds, I don't know where." (Gu Wenda)¹⁸³

Without tradition we cease to exist. To continue tradition is an historical inevitability. To get rid of tradition is bad luck. (Wang Chaowen)¹⁸⁴

The situation of *guohua* in the eighties brought into focus a particular aspect of the struggle between modernity and tradition, identity and change, the individual and the collective (nation). On the one hand *guohua* was a uniquely Chinese tradition of painting and as such there was a strong feeling that it should be kept alive and healthy, that it should be given continuity and that it should remain untainted by Western art. On the other hand Marxist perception of historical progress required that art reflect the age and the spirit of the age, but many artists felt that *guohua* was unsuited to portray modernity, that it emphasised technique at the expense of theory and ideas, and that its traditional subject categories were limiting. The long period of apprenticeship required to truly master technique was also seen by some to take up the most creative years of an artist's life absorbing the artist into its system and leaving little room for originality. The process was likened to a silkworm

¹⁸³ Fan Jingzhong "Silence and Transcendence" *Meishu* 7/1986:46-52

¹⁸⁴ Summary of Wang Chaowen's speech in "Chinese Art Under the Impact of Western Culture. National Art Theory Conference Held in Yantai" *Meishu* 10/1986:70-71+67. Wang's speech "There is no Today Without Yesterday. Speech at the National Theory Conference" was published in *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1986:18-24

weaving a cocoon round itself only to find that when it had finished it could no longer break out.¹⁸⁵ In short, tradition could also be a heavy burden to be carried into an uncertain future.

The struggle for the future of *guohua* was played out on two different levels: in public through organised debates and largescale exhibitions, and in private through the personal approach of individual artists. In general, the parameters of creation in the eighties had shifted considerably from the anti-traditionalism of the Cultural Revolution. *Guohua* once again gained popularity and official approval. The *guohua* that was revived was not simply the "new *guohua*" tradition of the fifties, with its emphasis on Western techniques and revolutionary content. Like oil painting *guohua* also sought to free itself from leftist influence. If art was to be created according to its own laws, then *guohua* should be created following the laws of *guohua* itself. There was then a strong tendency among the older generation to look to pre-liberation *guohua* for the essence of tradition. Picture albums of the older generation of artists such as Lu Yanshao now tended to omit all pictures with revolutionary content or industrial subject-matter and instead reproduced works with traditional subject matter of scholars in reclusion (fig 5.01). At the art academies, copying old masterpieces began to supplant drawing from life as the main part of the curriculum; *xieyi* style began to gain precedence over more detailed and realistic forms of depiction; traditional bird and flower paintings became more popular and landscape paintings were emptied of the electricity pylons, factories and roads which had been so much in evidence during the fifties. Even figure paintings strayed away from depicting typical contemporary figures to portray lighthearted and traditional subjects such as the colourful outlaws from the Ming novel "The Watermargin" (fig 5.02).¹⁸⁶

Alongside the rediscovery of tradition there was a general concern that *guohua* should not stagnate and die out, but that it should develop and keep up with the times. The 6th National Art Exhibition provided an opportunity to review the situation of *guohua* and a conference on the subject of "How to Develop Chinese Painting" was held in October

¹⁸⁵ Gai Maosen "Innovation is the Main Tendency in the Present Development of Chinese Painting" *Meishu* 12/1984:4-5

¹⁸⁶ Ralph Croizier "Qu Yuan and the Artists: Ancient Symbols and Modern Politics in the Post-Mao Era." in Jonathan Unger (edited) *Using the Past to Serve the Present* East Gate Books, USA 1993:124-150.

1984.¹⁸⁷ The published speeches expressed a recognition that the main trend in the art world was for innovation (especially among young artists) and that this was mostly a good sign. Praising the positive side of development, Hunan artist Zhou Shaohua (b.1929) wrote:

The fact of being conceived, developing and maturing along with new China (means) one of its most evident characteristics is that it gleams with the splendour of the age and announces the spirit of the age, giving expression to the lofty sentiments of the age; it is not simplified and conceptualised but it creatively serves the overall tasks and goals of the Party and the nation using the uniqueness and artistic function of Chinese painting; its relation to the construction of material civilization is simultaneous and harmonious. It is modern Chinese painting which has the characteristics of socialist art.¹⁸⁸

The positive side of development, as in other forms of art, reflected a shift away from leftist influence towards portraying the new "socialist" values of the era of the Four Modernisations. The difference in the case of *guohua* was the greater importance given to developments that paid attention to the specific character of *guohua*. This was already reflected in the 6th National Art Exhibition, especially in the gold award work *Iron Walls in the Taihang Mountains* which used the traditional "axe-cut" brushstrokes of *shanshui* to portray the rocklike steadfastness of revolutionary heroes (fig 5.03).¹⁸⁹ In terms of portraying modern subject matter fewer artists attempted this type of development. Li Shinan (b.1940), an artist who attempted to use the *xieyi* style to depict miners, admitted adapting traditional techniques to portray modern subjects was a very difficult task and a real challenge for future artists (fig 5.04).¹⁹⁰ A more popular trend followed by Jia Youfu (b.1942), Zhang Zhenxue (b.1939) and Zhou Shaohua (fig 5.05) among others was to use features of Chinese landscape and history to symbolise the resilient character, the vitality or the antiquity of the Chinese people.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ A selection of speeches from the conference were published in *Meishu* 12/1984 .

¹⁸⁸ Zhou Shaohua "Chinese Painting in a Time of Change and Renewal" *Meishu* 12/1984:9-10

¹⁸⁹ Tian Liming's *Forest of Steles* used the same idea but was judged ideologically weak in composition because it depicted the revolution too bleakly and was too exaggerated. See Ye Qianyu "The Revelation of the 6th National Art Exhibition" *Meishu* 2/1985:3-9

¹⁹⁰ Li Shinan "Modern Life is Waiting for us to Give Rein to Our Talent" *Meishu* 1/1985:4-5.

¹⁹¹ The animal in Zhou Shaohua's picture seems to be an Eastern Han stone lion sculpture.

These developments, although innovations, still left some critics such as Ma Hongzeng (b.1940) with the feeling that Chinese painting was not modern enough and still had far to go to catch up with the times. Expanding on what he meant by modern feeling, Ma wrote that apart from the usual demands for unity of form and content, and the need to express real life and the spirit of the age, it also "includes conforming with modern people's aesthetic concepts and the pursuit of *new art forms and new art language*"¹⁹² (italics added). Having said this Ma immediately stumbles on the main problem that was going to plague all efforts at innovation throughout the decade.¹⁹³ Namely the introduction of elements of Western modern art which clashed with the requirements of the "new *guohua*" tradition and more importantly with the traditional *guohua* which had come back into fashion.

Nevertheless experiments of combining modern forms with *guohua* tradition were abundant and could even be said to be the main tendency among the younger generation. The typical approach was to stretch the boundaries of *guohua* into other areas such as folk art and modernism. Some of the boldest experiments at the time were carried out among the special *shanshui* research class supervised by Lu Yanshao at the ZAFPA. Gu Wenda's (b.1955) pictures in the early eighties were on a very large scale and used ink-pouring techniques combined with Chinese and Western symbols to create striking, mysterious images (fig 5.06 & 5.07). Zhuo Hejun (b.1943) also used ink pouring techniques in large pictures in which he reversed the usual relation between substance and emptiness, creating large spaces of black (instead of white) emptiness (fig 5.08). Innovative experiments were continued several years later by another research student Chen Xiangxun (b.1956) who painted a series of abstract pictures in which he amplified the brushstroke of traditional painting so that the brushstrokes themselves became the subject of the picture (fig 5.09).

These members of the younger generation no doubt had a different attitude to tradition than their elders. Those who had grown up during the Cultural Revolution were "discovering" tradition at the same time as they were discovering western art. They had no

¹⁹² Ma Hongzeng "The Modern Feeling of Chinese Painting and the Innovation Trend" *Meishu* 12/1984:11-12.

¹⁹³ Some artists and critics were worried about the more worried about political considerations such as that art should continue to serve politics (Chen Baiyi b.1926) and the correct use of distortion, exaggeration and ugliness in painting (Yang Zhiguang b. 1930)

reason to exclude one at the expense of the other. The choice of *guohua* was merely one of the alternatives open to them and their priorities lay more in trying to make *guohua* relevant to their experience than in giving it continuity. Yet at the same time as they were under great pressure to conform with the demands of socialist art and any of their innovations were likely to be accused of being non-original imitations of Western art, they also had the extra burden of fulfilling the expectations of traditional painting. Their relationship to tradition was bound to be a difficult one.

The experiences and reactions of Gu Wenda, who became one of the most controversial *guohua* painters of the early eighties are a case in point. Gu came to take up *guohua* by chance. He had been a propaganda member of a Red Guard faction at middle school, then after a brief spell in the countryside he was accepted to study woodcarving in the Shanghai Arts and Crafts College. There, he met a teacher of *shanshui* painting and started learning with him. By the time he was accepted to study *shanshui* at the Zhejiang Academy of Art Gu was already also making oil paintings and had distanced himself from his early *guohua* paintings in the style of Li Keran which he felt were not art. Describing his time as a research student at the ZAFA, Gu said:

In learning traditional things, I did not like to copy directly. I put ancient pictures beside me and painted as I pleased, borrowing when I felt it was right. After entering the college, the curriculum required the direct copying of ancient pictures. Probably something to do with my character, I would copy a rock and feel it was uninteresting, I would get a new sheet of paper, copy a bit more and lose interest again. In two years of study, apart from copying a painting by Wang Meng I did not make a complete copy of any painting, I just read a load of books, and brainwashed myself, so it is as if in two years I had become a completely new person.¹⁹⁴

Gu Wenda's attitude to Western modern art was similar to his attitude towards tradition. In his interview with Fei Dawei (d.o.b. unknown) he spoke of himself breaking away from Western modernism as he felt many Chinese artists were becoming its captives.

¹⁹⁴ Fei Dawei "Challenging the Modernists. An Interview with Gu Wenda" *Meishu* 7/1986:53-56+63.

Gu was concerned not to repeat himself nor what others had done. He spoke of "transcending tradition" and of "digging a grave for Western modern art". To do this he adopted a particular strategy different to the logical formulae for development advocated at the time.¹⁹⁵ Gu first used Western modernism to criticise Chinese tradition, then returned to tradition to attack Western modernism. In this process, Gu relied on "intuition" to break out of the normal paths of development. He felt that rational creation led to artificiality whereas intuition could lead to a realm of truth beyond the everyday truths we take for granted.¹⁹⁶ This idea is cleverly set out in his "Art Diary" with the metaphor of a world of certainties enclosed within a wall, surrounded by a space of truth which is equally valid but which we do not yet understand.¹⁹⁷ Many of Gu's pictures evidently try to reach this realm where truth in the concepts or knowledge we take for granted is undermined or denied to open the way for other potential truths (figs 5.10 & 5.11). Of course this explanation also excuses Gu from having to give his pictures specific readings.

Gu's pictures apart from being difficult to understand were generally viewed with suspicion. Fan Jingzhong (d.o.b.unknown) spoke of him having to paint behind closed doors to avoid social pressure, and of people thinking it strange that an artist with as good a grasp of traditional skills should choose to make such provocative paintings when he could be reaping praise as a traditional artist.¹⁹⁸ The dual public reaction to Gu Wenda was reflected in the layout of his first solo exhibition held in Xi'an in June 1986. Here his traditional pictures were exhibited in one hall open to the general public, whereas his controversial pictures, including a pyramidal installation with pictures of his work in action, were exhibited in another hall for internal viewing only.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ In the early eighties one of the popular slogans for development was *zhongxi jiehe* (combining East and West), which meant combining different schools of modern art with Chinese subject matter and tradition. Examples of such essays are: Lang Shaojun "Two Ways of Borrowing - Attempting Innovation in *guohua*" *Meishu* 1/1982:15-19. Li Xianting "The Reasonable Development of Chinese Painting" *Meishu* 1/1986:8-12.

¹⁹⁶ In his notes he uses examples of twentieth century developments in science and philosophy, and of scientists' attitudes towards knowledge. In Gu Wenda "Art Diary" *Huajia* 1/1985.

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix III.

¹⁹⁸ Fan Jingzhong "Silence and Transcendence" *Meishu* 7/1986:46-52

¹⁹⁹ Xiao Chun "A Brief Record of Gu Wenda's First Solo Exhibition" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 33/1986

By the time of Gu's exhibition in Xi'an the problem of innovation in Chinese painting had already erupted into a nationwide debate in the art world after a young Nanjing art student, Li Xiaoshan published a couple of provocative articles on the subject. In the first of these articles Li Xiaoshan argued that the tradition of *guohua* was rooted in feudal culture, and that now it was no longer a question of supplementing and making small changes to the tradition, what was needed was a complete renovation of concepts. He then criticised the shortcomings of the older generation of artists including specific examples of twentieth century masters.²⁰⁰

In the second article, "The Preconditions for the Existence of Chinese Painting", Li Xiaoshan took issue with the slogan of the "innovation of Chinese painting." He described the older generation as being unable to change, whereas the middle age artists were those who most shouted the slogan of "innovation" but were unable to become the developers of the art world. Li added that those most able to lead the art world were artists of the younger generation for whom the basic inner structure of *guohua* had long ago disintegrated. In his criticisms Li was not stating that tradition could not be continued, but that the sense of duty to continue it in terms of this slogan is rather a misguided and artificial idea. He said that tradition could be continued for its own sake as it is, but that if one wants to do something different, this slogan is but a pretext which can only lead to confusion:

"An interesting example is that when many artists have already breached the boundaries of Chinese painting, but still do not dare to admit their creation, still muddledly boasting "innovation of Chinese painting", critics then proved the reasonableness of the "innovation of Chinese painting" without further thought according to their preconceptions. They deny the simple reasoning that if we agree that those freaks which are not one thing or the other (which in terms of form have already basically abandoned the rules which Chinese painting must have) are innovations of Chinese painting, then Chinese painting in its future form of existence will surely be an infinite, all-inclusive "painting category". When the intention of a concept has been abstracted, then the concept itself has been abstracted, this is a normal principle. So to try to make too many changes in the system of Chinese painting, or in

²⁰⁰ Li Xiaoshan "My Opinions On Contemporary Chinese Painting" *Jiangsu Huakan* 7/1985. See appendix. The articles this controversy gave rise to were published in Zhang Xuecheng (edited by) *My Opinion on Contemporary Chinese Painting. Collected Essays* .

other words to make changes occur in the basic structure of the system of Chinese painting, would be to have abolished Chinese painting in its original meaning. It is based on such a view that I stress that Chinese painting exists as a painting category retaining tradition. An artist does not need to sacrifice his unique creativity for the rules of Chinese painting, he is entirely right to cast aside all restraints, using his own intuition and artistic feelings as a guide, social rhythm and aesthetic habits as a reference, using tradition to nurture the genuine art of Chinese modern painting. At the same time artists with the will to continue ploughing the garden of Chinese painting can also foster traditional art as their purpose, devoting themselves to their research without too much disturbance. Only in this way can one preserve the national characteristics of Chinese painting, without being bound by them, ensuring the artist has room for a full freedom of choice, opening up a new aspect of artistic pluralism."²⁰¹

Li resolves the contradiction between wanting to innovate Chinese painting without breaking its laws by saying that tradition should remain tradition while art should make use of tradition without being bound by it. Others were of the opinion that time would decide which experiments would continue to be called Chinese painting and which would fall outside this category. Ultimately the concept of Chinese painting was an unsatisfactory one. It remained tied to a particular period of Chinese history, and to a narrow tradition within that period, to a particular use of materials as Wang Luxiang (d.o.b.unknown) wrote:

"People indeed are used to excluding "murals" from their concept of "Chinese painting". People often praise Chen Hongshou's prints of the heroes of the Watermargin and of Qu Yuan walking and chanting as prime examples of the *baimiao* technique of Chinese painting, but they generally exclude woodcut printing from their concept of Chinese painting: people express admiration for the Chinese painting interest of the decorative lines and use of colour of the lacquer paintings of the Han dynasty tombs at Mawangdui, but they exclude oil painting and decorative painting from their concept of Chinese painting. Yet again, some foreign artists have used the 'four treasures' of Chinese painting to paint a *shanshui* painting and people also do not think this is Chinese painting, are not these phenomena interesting?"²⁰²

²⁰¹ Li Xiaoshan "The Preconditions for the Existence of Chinese Painting" *Meishu Sichao* 7/1985

²⁰² Wang Luxiang "My Opinion On Clarifying Concepts", in Zhang Xuecheng 1990:274

This issue of the boundaries of the category of *guohua* also involved the questions of what moves were considered acceptable and who determined their validity and on occasion confrontations were deliberately provoked. In the 1989 graduation exhibition at the ZAFA Tang Song (b.1962) made an installation consisting of a box with traditional landscapes painted on the sides in which he placed a live tortoise. Kong Zhongqi (b.1934), one of the ZAFA *guohua* teachers, understood this as a deliberate challenge to the accepted parameters of *guohua* painting. He was all for just allowing it to be exhibited without making a fuss, and was quite amused when the artists reached his objective of having his work rejected, thus giving rise to lively debate.²⁰³

The need for controversy and debate, however, was genuine. Attempts to innovate were often viewed by traditionalists as un Chinese. Relying on old stereotypes, they argued that there was a temperamental difference between Chinese and Western people: Western people were more outwardly expressive which explained why they favoured such styles as Expressionism which allowed for "venting of emotions"; Chinese people by contrast emphasised self-control, self cultivation, and personal morality which shunned the pursuit of fame for its own sake. Such opinions, while being little more than generalised prejudices, tended converge debates around the aesthetics of traditional brushwork whereas, as the aesthetician Gao Ertai (b.1935) pointed out, innovation in art also involved issues far beyond the field of art.

We can see in the field of culture, for example that the contention whether one wants new concepts and methods or not has practically implicated such acute social questions as whether we want reforms or not and whether we want to open up to the outside or not. This contention is actually being carried out to a different extent in each branch of learning, and the significance of this contention has gone far beyond the various specific cultural (In the narrow sense), artistic, literary, and social questions involved, re-constructing concepts of value of the present and future ages, and also the choices for the future prospects of the fate of our

²⁰³Accounts of the oral examination of that particular graduation class are still remembered with much amusement by other students who were allowed to attend. One student whose paintings of large buildings were described as being both technically bad and ugly turned his defence into a comedy by explaining that the buildings were beautiful because they were the newest and most modern and that they had great social merit because they could house more people than existing buildings.

ancestral country and for every individual's way of existence. These are no longer theoretical problems but urgent actual problems which our age faces and all these questions are interlinked.²⁰⁴

5.2. Oil Painting and Modernity

Oil painting, while not so restrictively burdened by tradition, faced similar challenges in pursuing originality. When the gates to the outside world opened Chinese artists discovered a whole new set of possibilities in modern western art. As they tried out new forms of art they gradually began to stray away from the modern art sanctioned and promoted by the Party. This new art did not seek technical perfection nor did it direct a single and unequivocal message to the viewer. As a result it was not so easily understood or accepted by the general public. At the same time many people were quick to spot the similarities between the new works and those of Western modern art, and tended to view them as mere copies.

Signs of heterodoxy began to appear soon after the AYCA exhibition, and some of the first such exhibitions came from art academy students who had access to exhibition spaces. At the Zhejiang Academy of Art, under the atmosphere of tolerance and emancipation of thought, the supervising teachers of the graduation class of 1985 opted for not interfering with the graduation works. The result was a controversial exhibition which according to one reviewer first gave an impression of rich diversity and freshness, with works that were bold in subject matter, form and techniques of expression, then subsequently gave an impression that the level of the works were not high, there were not many successful works and that the exhibition seemed more of a young artist's exploration exhibition rather than an art academy graduation exhibition.²⁰⁵

The works which were consistently picked out for criticism were those which tended more obviously towards Western modern art, such as: Irrepressible Spring-filled Garden (fig

²⁰⁴ Gao Ertai "In Defence of Li Xiaoshan" *Jiangsu Huakan* 1/1987

²⁰⁵ Li Yitai "Feelings About this Year's Graduation Works" *Meishu* 9/1985:17-18

5.12) by Liu Dahong (b.1962), Two People Under the Lamplight by Geng Jianyi (b.1962), Soft Sculpture (fig 5.13) by Wang Qiang (b.1957) and Laozi (fig 5.14) by Lin Chun (b.1960). The main accusation against these works was that they were mere copies, and as a result were lacking in national character, character of the age and personality. In addition they paid too much attention to technique and method of expression at the expense of content, or in the case of Lin Chun's sculpture paid no attention to technique.

Learning from Western modern art was a contentious point. Setting out the official academy viewpoint, Xiao Feng (b.1932), dean of the ZAFA, explained that the splendid and ever-changing exterior of western modern art hid an inner emptiness. He equated the "serious explorations" carried out in Western modern art with those which bore similarities to traditional Chinese art while the majority of other artists were just cynical troublemakers. "We should realise", he wrote "that Western modern art is a spiritual product of the social conditions of modern capitalism, it suffers the manipulation of capitalist economic forces and the restrictions of spiritual crises, it is frequently a very short-term development which sinks into unescapable contradictions."²⁰⁶

While modernisation was put forward as a goal for China and the West was recognised to be ahead in many fields, political differences remained a serious factor to be taken into consideration. To Xiao Feng the West was not a model, but a useful reservoir for selective borrowing. "Just as in economics, capitalism is a corrupt system that exploits workers surplus value," he wrote, "there are still many things worth borrowing from it in terms of economic management". The approach in the field of culture, however was to be more cautious. Borrowing from modern art, he warned was not the same as borrowing from advanced modern technology. Art belonged to the category of states of consciousness and in this aspect, Xiao Feng asserted "in the history of mankind socialist spiritual civilization is the hope of human civilization."

²⁰⁶ Xiao Feng "Discussing a Few Problems of the Graduation Works - Speech at the Zhejiang Academy of Art's Graduation Conference." *Meishu* 9/1985:19-25

Interpreting modernity and selective borrowing from the West remained difficult issues. Later that year the Zhejiang Academy of Art held another controversial exhibition.²⁰⁷ The "1985 New Space Exhibition" (2/12/1985) according to Bao Jianfei (b.1959), one of the participants, was held with the sense of duty and with the hope of both "understanding, drawing on and absorbing the quintessence of Western modern art and understanding the essence of contemporary national art."²⁰⁸

The results were certainly different from what the audience was used to. Midsummer Swimmers (fig 5.15) by Zhang Peili (b.1957) depicted a group of youths swimming in an environment painted in intense blues and devoid of all but the most essential details; Summer 1985, Yet Another Shaved Head (fig 5.16) by Geng Jianyi isolated another seemingly most ordinary experience of everyday life in a similarly terse painting language; In End Note (fig 5.17) by Zhang Peili a motionless figure stared expressionlessly out at the viewer; People. Pipeline (fig 5.19) by Song Ling (b.1961) showed a rather mechanical, dehumanised, modern environment. Wang Qiang's sculpture 5th Symphony, 2nd Movement, Beginning Adagio (fig 5.20) portrayed a headless handless musical conductor.

Reactions to the exhibition were mixed. In an article summing up the opinions put forward at a conference held to discuss the exhibition, Shi Jiu (pen name of Zhang Peili) noted three different responses: approval, disapproval and indecision.²⁰⁹ Those who disapproved of the exhibition dismissed it as a mere copy of the West: "The New Space is not new at all. They had it in the West long ago". Furthermore, it did not conform to their criteria for Chineseness - they felt there was "little inquisition into how to combine national and folk art with one's creation". In contrast, others thought this was a great effort to break the national boundaries of art: that although the works used techniques of Western art schools

²⁰⁷ The exhibition was held in the name of the Zhejiang Branch of the Chinese Artist's Association and the Youth Creation Society. The participants were all students of the Zhejiang Academy of Art, the direct planning and organisation was in the hands of the "Youths' Creation Society". Established in 1984, its earliest members included Bao Jianfei, a graduate of the print department; Zhang Peili, Cha Li and Geng Jianyi, all of whom were graduates from the oil painting department; and Song Ling who had graduated from the Chinese Painting Department.

²⁰⁸ Bao Jianfei "Ourselves and Our Creations" *Meishu* 2/1986:48-49

²⁰⁹ Shi Jiu "About the Response to the 'New Space' Exhibition" *Meishu* 2/1986:47-48

they basically expressed the impressions of contemporary Chinese whose standpoint was national so one could still feel the temperament of Eastern people.

This great divergence in the response to the exhibition extended to all its aspects. Some felt the exhibition gave a feeling of icy coldness, and were unsure as to whether reality was supposed to be cold or whether the artist was facing it in a cold way. Others felt that despite the feeling of coldness, the pictures still manifested the enthusiasm of the artists and a new mechanical, decorative and geometric aesthetic of mass production and urban civilisation which was no longer a reproduction of the natural impressions of agricultural production. Regarding subject matter one group thought there was too much description and not enough content. The others thought that it dug up new subject matter, it was moving and unique and discovered the meaning of art in everyday life revealing another space through ordinary description.

The most important part of the conference review dealt with whether the exhibition was understandable or not. A vice-director of the Academy reported that he had been to see the exhibition three times. The first time he did not understand it, nor the second time, nor even the third time. He thought the artists were being deliberately obscure to make fools of the audience. Others thought that though they did not know exactly what the pictures meant they could more or less make out what the artists wanted to say. A third group thought that there were different levels of understanding and whether one understood or not was determined by one's level of understanding and structure of knowledge.

The exhibition showed a growing questioning of the idea of modernism that explored a thin line between official aesthetics and rebellion. Early disenchantment with the official interpretation of modernism had been expressed by Huang Yongping in his 1983 graduation pictures. Rather than turning out the usual realist works on the theme of modern industry, Huang decided to use industrial tools and left over sheets of metal to spraypaint works that "exposed the attraction of mechanical power" and "erased human traces", making him "feel at harmony with the factory surroundings". It also got rid of the opinion that in exploring

modernism it was "inadvisable to go beyond the Fauves and Expressionists".²¹⁰ Few were as outrageous, but many followed in an aesthetic of modernity that was increasingly clean and rationalised. This was a strong trend in the 1984 graduation works, particularly in Song Ling's Pavers of the Ocean and Zhang Peili's Competitors.²¹¹ Yet somehow along the way disenchantment seems to have crept in and rationalism turned into a cold resistance to playing by the rules of depicting smiling modernity and accepting the usual assignments. Why, Jiang Feng had asked at the 85 graduation speech had Geng Jianyi, who had made such good sketches of Tibetans, changed direction and painted a dull picture of two people under the lamplight?²¹² The subversiveness of the New Space Exhibition also lay in its silence and motionless, a feeling that they won't play the game, yet there are understated hints of rebellion in the bald haircuts, a sign of roguishness which some of the students had begun to adopt that summer.²¹³ In this light, Peili's report about different levels of understanding also seems to be a dig at the academy authorities. The works aren't incomprehensible, but what can be done if you don't get it?

As the modern art trend continued to grow and gain adherents and confidence there arose a growing need to explain its occurrence and to find ways of dealing with it. In an article discussing the topic published in mid 1986, Liu Xilin (b.1942) examined the emergence of the youth art current from a sociological point of view to find out how this craze for modern art had taken root in China. He thought that the appearance of this new art in socialist China was not normal, that modern Chinese society was not the soil to produce modernism and post-modernism, it did not have the unstable social conditions of the world

210 Huang Yongping "Talking About Some of My Paintings" *Meishu* 1/1983:22

211 "As a Chinese person I fervently hope our industry can catch up with the advanced countries... The basic principle of industrial society is standardisation and regularisation. In industrialised society, not only products are standardised, but language, culture and customs must be standardised. In the rendering of the figures in the picture, I painted all the hats, shoes, gloves, and so on exactly the same, even the people's shape, height and age were as uniform as possible to strengthen this tone of industrialised society." Song Ling "The Creation of Pavers of the Ocean" *Xin Meishu* 4/1984:29. For a similar description of Zhang Peili's picture see Shen Runtang "Era and Originality. A Brief Review of the 1984 Graduates of the Zhejiang Academy of Art" *Xin Meishu* 4/1984:24-25.

212Xiao Feng "Discussing a Few Problems of the Graduation Works - Speech at the Zhejiang Academy of Art's Graduation Conference." *Meishu* 9/1985:19-25

213 For the significance of shaved heads see Li Xianting "The 'Shaved Head Popi' Created by Fang Lijun" in *Fang Lijun. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Cahiers nr 13* Holland 1998.

war and economic crises from which western modern art had arisen. Nevertheless, he thought the craze for importing western modernism was not wholly unconnected to Chinese reality.

The intense social shock they received was the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, the economic crises, the perplexity of faith and ossified art models. Bearing these social scars, just at the time when they were enjoying the prospects of the sea of life the world also brought them the news of the economically, technically developed and highly modernised life of western modern society where art can do whatever it pleases. This filled their thought and art vacuum. The structural knowledge in which they were firstly and mainly instructed was western modern science, philosophy and aesthetics, their main art was western modernism. They seemed to have nothing to do with the communist faith and were also different from social playboys... When they entered society, bureaucracy, administrative decrees and mechanical work allocations stifled their personality. They were highminded but found no ideal refuge, their solitude was not commonly understood. So their perplexity, their thoughts, their feeling of solitude, of coldness, their contradictory mentality, their destructive desire, their nihilism, even their disillusioned cynicism, their sexual consciousness all found an outlet in the inner spirit and behaviour of western modern art.²¹⁴

Liu Xilin adopted what was basically a patronising attitude towards new art. While he appealed for tolerance, he saw new art as unharmonious and immature, the result of social scars and alienation that did not allow young artists to fully participate in the new China.²¹⁵ He further criticised young artists for not fulfilling their duty in repaying their debt to society.

The overwhelming presence of new art in China also demanded a revising of the discourse of art history and national character to encompass new art in some form, and as usual most attempts tried to trace out directions for the development of Chinese art. Here again, a wide range of opinions were published:

Pan Yaochang (b.1947) represented the conservative socialist view. He saw China as having three cultures: 1 Traditional culture formed in feudal society. 2 Marxist culture

²¹⁴ Liu Xilin "Rebels Against Their Age - Between Youth Art Trend and Society" *Meishu* 6/1986:10-13

²¹⁵ "They did not take into account the disharmony between rebellious art and reforming society, hence giving rise to the perplexing situation of not being accepted by society, bringing a sense of loss and contradictory mentality."

imported from Soviet Union and reformed through revolutionary practice. 3. European American system of capitalist culture. Among the three, socialist culture was to occupy the dominant position and fuse the others.²¹⁶

Shen Xinggong (b.1943) did not put the question in such a political context but set up a framework of progress which delayed judgement on contemporary art. He excused the current shortcomings of Chinese art as being part of a long process of absorption and assimilation. He wrote that China was now in a position of moving from the initial state of absorption, to one of introspection, from where it would develop into a self supporting system.²¹⁷ In examining questions of culture he suggested using multidirectional comparisons which would get away from the problem of single vertical comparisons (i.e. comparing past and present) - which made one only see the continuity or interruption in traditional culture, and horizontal (i.e. cross cultural) comparisons - which often ended up focusing on cultural differences.

Dai Hengyang (b.1946) was more positive about the prospects of Chinese oil painting. He traced the shifting of the centre of oil painting from Italy to France to the US, and saw the possibility of China too contributing new elements to become a new star in the international art world.²¹⁸ As to new art he saw it as being based on the fragmentation of traditional aesthetics and saw modernist aesthetics as "a world more severe, more fierce, more able to penetrate pain. An aesthetics which cannot have confidence in the power of the self and people." He felt that generally the avant-garde nature of young artists' works was not a blind imitation of the West but was connected to the subjective pursuit of an artist, and that the anti-rational tragic consciousness of humanity had led to "individual richer, more unique and diverse inner worlds."

²¹⁶ Pan Yaocang "Comparing, Choosing and Thinking. The Character of Contemporary Art Culture" *Meishu* 6/1986:24-26.

²¹⁷ Shen Xinggong "Absorbion, Introspection and Supporting Oneself" *Meishu* 7/1986:24-26.

²¹⁸ Dai Hengyang "Oil Painting's Path to Transcendence. Human Character, Modern Character and National Character" *Meishu* 7/1986:27-30.

The question of how to deal with the impact of Western culture was made the subject of a six day theory conference held in Yantai, Shandong province in July 1986.²¹⁹ The conference brought together over sixty critics, theorists and artists from the main institutes in China and was chaired by the veteran art theorist Wang Chaowen (b.1910) who made the opening speech. In all there were eight more speeches delivered on special topics and 27 voluntary speeches. Giving an account of recent developments in the art world, the vice editor of *Jiangsu Huakan*, Xu Zuliang (b.1943) made a summary of the Li Xiaoshan controversy, while the art critic Gao Minglu introduced the main trends of the new wave art movement. Other speeches focused on the value of tradition and how to deal with new wave art. They also represented widely different perceptions of Chinese art and proposed different equations for its development. A good idea of the main arguments can be gained from the summary that appeared in *Meishu*.

Lang Shaojun (b.1939) of the Chinese Art Research Institute put forward a classical historicist interpretation of the relation between Eastern and Western culture. He said that modern cultural history unfolded against the background of a feudal and semi-feudal China heading towards modernity. Its focus was the struggle between China and the West which represented the ancient and the new: modern Western civilization, including Marxism was one level above the civilization of Chinese feudal society. Therefore the struggle between China and the West in modern Chinese cultural history was frequently a struggle between these two levels of civilization (including art), although modernisation did not mean westernisation.

Such a view of Chinese culture and especially of Chinese art was unacceptable to Pan Gongkai (b.1947), director of the academic journal of the ZAFA and son of Pan Tianshou. Pan denied that there was any crisis in traditional Chinese art, arguing that there had appeared none of the indications of decline, cracking up, fragmentation, alienation and self-negation that were already apparent in western modern art. He said that the threat to the survival of Chinese painting was not a problem of Chinese painting itself but lay in the

²¹⁹ "Chinese Art Under the Impact of Western Culture. National Art Theory Conference Held in Yantai" *Meishu* 10/1986:70-71+67

dramatic changes that had occurred in its environment: The widespread disparity in wealth between China and the West had given rise to a natural tendency in social mentality to yearn for Western material life and culture. Pan forecast two phases of Chinese culture heading towards modernity: 1 Coping with the clash; 2 Preserving the core of traditional culture, knowing how significant the Eastern spirit could be to future society.

This view of storing the "Eastern spirit" away for some bright day in the future was in turn criticised by Hubei art academy lecturer Pi Daojian. He argued there were three possible stances one could take with regard to tradition: Locating oneself in the past - fearing to lose tradition and advocating its protection; Locating oneself in the future - thinking that the future culture of the world will be a renaissance of Chinese culture, and so advocating the preservation of tradition for the future; Locating oneself in the present to face grim reality, advocating opening up and importation to transform tradition. He said the only real choice was to stand in the present, to negate and transform tradition

He added that the core of traditional Chinese culture was a pursuit of harmony, the unity of heaven and man. This relation to nature, however, turned man into a passive object rather than an active subject. Such a culture was suited to a self-sufficient natural economy and cyclical production. It made up a whole feudal consciousness that impeded people's active spirit making them lose the power to transcend themselves.

Sun Meilan (b.1931) of the Central Academy returned to Lang Shaojun's idea of Chinese and Western cultures being at different phases of historical development to make an observation about the relation between the two systems. She said people often use the example of Han and Tang culture to show China's natural strength in digesting foreign culture, but pointed out that whereas then both Chinese and Western cultures were in the specific phase of feudal society, they were now two distinct social systems with two different ideological structures. She thought that when China's politics, economics and culture were in a dominant position this did not present a problem, but when China was lagging behind there was a danger of underestimating oneself and blindly following the West.

One of the characteristics of much of this discourse of art was the preoccupation with future development. People tended to erect certain ideal frameworks to support their vision of Chinese art with almost complete disregard for the actual works that were being produced. This left little room for works to be seen on their own terms, and left artist's efforts out in the cold. At the Hunan *Guohua* conference, the story of Sisyphus became a symbol for unappreciated efforts of young artists to make innovations in *guohua*. In oil painting, Hong Zaixin's (b.1957) description of the "New Space" exhibition as a "brave sacrifice" captured the way in which people generally perceived young artists' work.²²⁰ It was brave because they had to make a thorough break with tradition, and it was a sacrifice because they were merely doing the work of catching up, as Hong wrote:

The art world after the implementation of the open door policy is no longer a stranger to new methods of expression of Western modern schools. The problem is that someone still has to put them into practice. In a certain sense to repeat the process of oil painting expression already experienced by the West is the mission of the creators of New Space.

5.3. Cultural Parameters

The Jiangsu Youth Art Exhibition was held in the Nanjing Art Museum in October 1985 and included over three hundred works by one hundred and thirty eight artists. Many of the works in the exhibition showed a curious tendency of combining elements of China's ancient culture with Surrealism. Dream of Hua and Xia (fig 5.21) by Shen Qin (b.1958) shows the image of one of the terracotta warriors discovered in the Qin emperor's tomb near Xi'an within a dreamlike atmosphere. His Master and Disciple Dialogue (fig 5.22) depicts an ancient sage discussing timeless subjects with his disciple in a similarly timeless space. Summons by Ren Rong shows a caravan entering a gigantic statue of a sleeping Buddha in the desert. Work Number One (fig 5.23) by Cao Xiaodong (b.1961) again sets a Buddhist image within a surrealist space. The Wall series (fig 5.24) by Ding Fang (b.1956) takes the

²²⁰ Hong Zaixin "A Brave Sacrifice - The New Space Exhibition" *Meishu* 2/1986:44-46

image of a rugged ancient city wall to symbolise the resilient character of the ancient Chinese, an inspiration for present-day Chinese people.²²¹ People Evolved From Fish, People Like Eating Fish (fig 5.25) by Yang Zhilin (b.1956) takes a different approach from all the above to make a black-humoured observation about human nature.

The relation between modern art and ancient culture in these pictures is an interesting one. As artists got the chance to travel they came into contact with different aspects of Chinese culture - a rugged barren geography and more basic way of life which contrasted with the peaceful lifestyle of the watery landscape of Jiangnan and more important, a heritage of monumental art quite different from the refined *guohua* they usually considered their artistic tradition. For many artists, this legacy which had been eclipsed by the Cultural Revolution was becoming increasingly important in their perception of identity.²²² It is ironic, however, that though many people spoke of Chinese civilization as a long unbroken history, in the works of these young artists the links between the past and the present seemed very tenuous indeed and were framed in what their detractors accused of being a style copied from abroad.

Yet why should the choice of style be an issue when the artists were using it to "express what they wanted to say?"²²³ It is a strange coincidence that in the same month as this exhibition was held an article was published in *Meishu* criticising, not the act of borrowing certain styles from abroad, but the narrowness of the styles borrowed and the reasons why only some choices were considered acceptable.²²⁴ In his article, Zhang Baoqi (d.o.b.unknown) alerted people to the hypocrisy of certain artists who held high the banner of

²²¹ Ding Fang "City Wall - A symbol of Cultural Self-reflection" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 23/1985:1

²²² There is a similarity here with the "root-seeking" movement in literature. Leo Ou-fan Lee suggests the latter's return to researching and using ancient culture was a reaction against national identity as officially promoted during the Mao era. Writers felt the impact and grandeur of the past would make Communist ideology pale into insignificance. See Leo Ou-fan Lee - On the Margins of Chinese Discourse. Some Personal Thoughts on the Cultural Meaning of the Periphery" in Tu Weiming (edited by) *The Living Tree. The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* Stanford University Press 1994:221-226

²²³ "These kinds of works have often been mocked as 'imported parts assembled in China'. In a nutshell, I think this is unfair. Everybody admits that in the process of borrowing one cannot avoid traces of imitation. Only through comparison and differentiation can there be development. I think that even those works which do imitate are still valuable in two ways: they introduce all kinds of methods of visual expression of different styles of schools. They borrow other people's formal language to say what they want to say". Shen Xinggong "After the Collision. A Visit to the Jiangsu Youth Art Week Exhibition" *Jiangsu Huakan* 2/1986:16-18.

²²⁴ Zhang Baoqi "Facing the West Wind. Selective Acceptance and National Character." *Meishu* 10/1985:7-9

tradition but were in fact going to ancient historical sights to study modern art. i.e. going to Dunhuang and Yonglegong to find Modiglianis, and looking for the equivalent of Picasso in papercuts. He criticised decorative paintings done in styles derived from Klimt and Modigliani that had now become accepted as "orthodox styles having national character". Zhang attributed the reason for accepting some modern art schools while rejecting others to "national mentality and national disposition".²²⁵ He wondered whether Chinese people were unable to accept radical art because of their Confucian heritage and asked whether national character should be changed or protected. His own answer to this question was that obstinately defending national character and habits was not expression of greatness in a nation and one should allow "reason" and not "habit" to lead the way.

Negotiating the parameters of Chinese style in art and what type of art was relevant to China was not something new. It had been an ongoing argument since the beginning of the century. The problem now was whether it was justifiable to exclude certain forms of art on the grounds of national character, or if exclusion was even possible. In an article entitled "New Art, New Culture" Sun Jin argued that the emergence of such new art was natural since it reflected the demand for new culture and that it was therefore also inevitable. As for the parameters of Chinese culture, Sun wrote that in the twentieth century they had already shifted so much that traditional culture had all but ceased to exist, and China's new culture was essentially an imported one:

The ideological weapons of ancient China did not withstand modern Western scientific technology. The right to equality, the ideal of peace and happiness of land belonging to those who worked it and there being enough food for everyone was also defeated by enterprising individualism. Marxism saved China, yet even if this was due to the way it was integrated with Chinese reality it was ultimately an "imported" or "brought over" culture. In the cultural world there was even less need to emphasise this. Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, colloquial novels, oil painting, musicals, psychological description, flow of consciousness... all these from thought currents to models, right to the methods of creation were mostly imported. National essence (such as *guohua* and opera) still existed as before, or

²²⁵ He bases his analysis of Chinese character on the one made by Lin Yutang earlier in the century. This discussion was also connected to the "ugly Chinaman" debate about Chinese characteristics. See Bo Yang *The Ugly Chinaman and the Crisis of Chinese Culture* Allen and Unwin 1991.

developed a little further, but not only did existing things not flourish and have as much influence as the new things did, but psychologically people also treated new things with more energy and greater attention. Objectively, this situation had already to an extent interrupted Chinese cultural history, and seemed to have formed a blank in the last hundred years of traditional culture.²²⁶

The admission that most of 20th century Chinese cultural trends were basically imported was important for on the one hand it put all types of art on an equal footing, on the other it recognised that people were relating to Chinese culture within what was an essentially new cultural framework, heavily influenced by imported ideas of science, history, and so on. The consciousness of this cultural change made people even more aware of the transitory nature of national character and of its increasing unimportance.

This was a point made by Wang Huangsheng (b.1956) who attacked existing notions of the relation between national character and art.²²⁷ Wang wrote that it was thought that national character was determined by geography and mother tongue but that these ideas were now obsolete. He said national character was always changing, the Chinese nation itself had been formed by the merging of many smaller groups, and that this trend of assimilating to each other was increasing, and only in isolated places did one find tribal groups with uninfluenced cultural patterns.

In the realm of art, he argued that national character had nothing to do with artistic quality. This idea only seemed valid in the time when countries were isolated from each other and pictures provided a window to view the (often exotic) habits of other peoples. He argued however that great art was great because it revealed something about humanity as a whole and not about a particular nation and criticised the slogans that "without national character unique artistic individuality may be lost" (没有民族性就会失去独特的

²²⁶ Sun Jin "New Art and New Culture" *Meishu* 11/1986:10-11.

Sun Meilang made a similar point at the Yantai conference, pointing out that there was a great difference between the main figures of the May 4th movement who had a firm grounding in traditional culture and the youth from the 1950's onwards who had no such traditional education.

²²⁷ Wang Huangsheng "Modern Art. Indistinct National Character and Diversifying Individuality" *Meishu Sichao* 1/1986:7-11

艺术个性), "the more regional character, the more national character, the more universal character" (越有地方性民族性就越有世界性). He thought that ultimately the importance of globalisation and increased individualism would obscure the importance of nationality and even predicted that these might disappear:

In the future information society, multinational companies and trust groups' demands for globalisation will replace nations, states and communities which have restrictive one-sided demands. At the same time the individual's requirement for diversification will be satisfied and gain prominent expression.²²⁸

Li Song (b.1950) also argued that there was a trend away from nationality, that people were growing more similar to each other and racial mixtures becoming more frequent. He wrote that despite the growth of nationalist movements in the seventies, the trend in art was for increasing exchanges fusion and unity. Many forms of modern art and culture had no specific national characteristics. The reason for the retreat of national character in art was the trend of unification of aesthetic concepts, which in turn were caused by the unification of ways of production and way of life. He wrote that artists nowadays read the same magazines, listened to the same music, discussed the same topics. The information age had given every nation the chance to stand on the same starting line for development. At the same time the location of producer and consumer had changed and was no longer restricted by national boundaries:

The dispersal of the consumers and the concentration of the producing community are two formal characteristics of the development of modern art. It is what leads the admirers of one artwork no longer to be concentrated among one race or district, but to be scattered among races and locations. The so-called concentration of producers indicates that artists with

²²⁸ He also quotes a similar argument previously made by Marx and Engels:

"The bourgeoisie, has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country...In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party* Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1990:37-38

different styles are no longer scattered in every corner, but can coexist in the same culturally developed cities such as Paris, Tokyo or Beijing. In such cities, there is both regular traditional art and also newly emerging avant-garde art, as well as intermediate groups which all have their representatives. These two trends have posed a threat to the national character of art.²²⁹

The rejection of the demands that art have national character went beyond justifying it through change in environment and trends of history. It all came back to the question of modernisation and tradition, where modernisation was understood as importing modern Western scientific technology and pioneering business administration methods while advocating that culture should remain traditional. In "The Heavy Burden of History and Modern Self Awakening" Liang Jiang (b.1952) argued that this view was mistaken, that the modernisation of culture was crucial, "without the modernisation of people any country's blueprint for modernisation can only be an interesting waste". Looking back over history Liang sees this as being one of the major battles fought by such important figures as Sun Yatsen, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao.

Liang Jiang asks what are the basic characteristics and the core spirit of traditional Chinese culture and what role they should play in the present. He argued that tradition within the realm of culture meant much more than "aesthetic tastes", it was something which influenced "people's spiritual state, values, ways of thinking, mental make-up, aesthetic concepts, and influences the appearance of the whole of society and future prospects." More specifically, traditional culture was a three part system consisting of the political culture of patriarchal bureaucracy; social culture with orthodox clan ties as its guiding principle; and economic culture of small scale natural peasant production. A heritage he does not view as being particularly positive.²³⁰ Liang criticises the way of thinking inherited from this culture for its lack of logic and clear concepts and the confusion it has caused in the field of art.

²²⁹ Li Song "The Non-national Character of Art" *Meishu* 3/1987:22-24

²³⁰ "Indeed, emphasising human affairs, emphasising moral standards, emphasising describing emotional experience is an important characteristic of Chinese culture, Chinese scientific theory has never been as flourishing as technology, Chinese philosophy lacked a strict form of reasoning and exploration of abstract theory, Chinese aesthetics, on the basis of emotional way of thinking experiential state 经验形为感性 formed a system without tight-knit logic nor a high level of abstract thought. Such a model of thinking had a good role to play in forming of Chinese art style, but given expression in art research it was by no means a good thing. Recently many academic discussions still show a lack of tight-knit reasoning and the lack of a clear concept system This cannot but be traced back to that kind of tradition of Chinese thinking rejecting and inhibiting logic and dialectics.

For example, in the discussions about tradition over the years, what has always been emphasised is the necessity to carry on tradition and nurture its important significance. As to what tradition is, what rulers we should use to determine what is the quintessence of tradition, no one has ever got that far. Those broad but empty slogans despite being repeated over and over again, under the same superficial appearance, never had much scholarly content. Specifically in the field of art it has meant such disputes as the "nationalisation of oil painting". Although today's artists have already realised this unclear slogan can create a kind of model in art, hindering the development of pluralistic art styles, they still do not have enough understanding of the isolationist narrow mentality hidden behind it. 'Nationality' has been made a pretext for conservative mentality.²³¹

Returning to new wave art, the irony of the whole situation was that new wave art was no less relevant to Chinese identity and culture for having adopted new forms of Western modern art. On the contrary some of these made the sharpest observations about Chinese society and culture.

One of the most interesting of these exhibitions was the "70% Red, 25% Black, 5% White" exhibition by Wu Shanzhuan (b.1960) and the "Red Humour" group which was held at the Zhejiang Academy of Art (for internal viewing only) in May/June 1986. The artists, all graduates from the education department of the Academy, became interested in the aesthetic quality of printed Chinese characters, and sought to explore its effect to the maximum by using only limited colours and combinations: "If it is monotonous, repeat it. If it is simple, enlarge it." (fig 5.26). The aspect of the exhibition that most attracted attention, however was the contextualisation of language through contrast, colour and shape. The group took the phrases they used from different aspects of life, such as market language (colloquialisms and advertising), news language and philosophy/Chan Buddhism. They then recontextualised them by, for example, writing "cabbage, three *fen* for one *jin*" (白菜=仟钱一斤) on a bright red background, reminiscent of Cultural Revolution slogans; they contrasted language and philosophical symbols by writing "cigarettes, cigarettes..." within a "*Taiji*" (太极) shape; they used take-offs of advertising slogans as couplets which would traditionally go either

²³¹ Liang Jiang "The Heavy Burden of History and Modern Self-Awakening" *Meishu* 7/1986:13-15

side of a door: "eating lots is good for the belly, eating little means less to taste" (fig 5.27). These contrasts created an atmosphere of "serious absurdity" and had the effect of questioning different roles of language in everyday life.²³²

Such work of course was also relevant to Chinese identity and culture²³³, not an idealised culture but the very down to earth culture, including political culture, which surrounded people (fig 5.28) and it is perhaps the reason why certain experiments were not open to public viewing, and if possible rejected as not art.

This relation with public censorship was often a factor which made artists feel the relevance and appropriateness of their work, and at the same time encouraged them to try new forms. By 1988, Zhang Peili, for instance was making work as textual programmes, mailings, and video as well as oil painting. The theme of much of his work was social relations and disease. In 1987, Zhang sharpened the feeling of cold cleanness in his early pictures to an extreme in a series of paintings called X depicting surgical rubber gloves which had sinister connotations about "health" and "hygiene" and therefore also had strong overtones of social conformity and control. He explored the idea of transmission through a work called Brown Wrapper Book 1: a series of mailings of cut up rubber gloves - a meaningless act which nevertheless gave a feeling of subversiveness through circumventing the usual channels of exhibition, and having no clear understandable message.²³⁴

By making of videos, Zhang Peili moved into the arena of the most modern and effective medium of cultural transmission. The act he chose to record in his videowork 30 x 30 (fig 5.30) however, was the repeated action of carefully dropping panes of glass from a

²³² Gao Minglu (and others) *The History of Contemporary Chinese Art 1985-1986* 1991:191-199.

²³³ Sun Jin distinguished three main trends in the art world and analysed their relevance in relation to people's demands for "new culture". The first trend he called "non-traditional art". One of its most salient characteristics was that it is "hard to understand" (even the artists himself finds it hard to explain). To a certain extent, it also made a break with past culture, but in compensation it fulfilled the urgent demand for new culture and in time becomes more understandable. The second trend he called "nostalgic" style. This included portraying themes of ancient culture and earthy rural scenes and was close to the "root-seeking" movement in literature. It was generally understandable and gave people a feeling of intimacy, but in terms of new culture it was "blind" for it did not see the natural relation of growth between the roots and the branches. The third trend was "pure art" which seeks perfection in likeness and form. Because of China's low level of realistic technique, this trend appealed to many people, but also avoided asking any questions. Sun Jin 11/1986:10-11

²³⁴ My account of Zhang's work is mostly based on Lu Peng and Yi Dan *A History of Chinese Modern Art 1979-1989* 1992:Chapter 10.

given height and then carefully glued them back together with 502 adhesive. Viewed in the context of his other works, this action reminds one of the relentless patience and care needed for social control and shaping people's minds - a task for which television is well suited. The boring repetitiveness of the action alerts one to the mesmerising quality of the medium, even when showing the most meaningless, repetitive actions.²³⁵

5.4. The Predicament of History

Criticism of the narrow mentality of nationality now returned the initiative of making cultural choices to the individual, but this did not necessarily make the position of the artist that much easier. Although most artists no longer accepted the Marxist version of art historical development,²³⁶ most still perceived their efforts within certain formulae of development or as lagging behind Western art. This feeling of imprisonment and futility often found expression in the frequently voiced desire to make a breakthrough (突破). Reactions to this predicament were particularly clear in the strategies or attitudes of three artists: Gu Wenda, Huang Yongping (b.1954) and Ding Fang.

Gu Wenda's ideas we have already touched on. He relied on "intuition" to break through existing rational explanations of the world in the hope of escaping following in the tracks of his predecessors. Here his quote from Bergson to demonstrate the importance of

²³⁵ These themes were treated once again in more direct ways after Tiananmen, when Zhang Peili made two videos. One in which one of China's best known news readers reads out the entries of the standard dictionary; the other in which Zhang himself slowly sets about washing a chicken.

²³⁶ The Marxist version of art historical development was heavily criticised by Pi Daojian in 1982. Peng held that when the methodology of dialectical materialism was imported to China in the fifties, it came as a ready-made formula. As a result art historians started to set out from set "principles" rather than reality. They then gathered facts according to these principles in order to further support these principles themselves. This typically took the form of writing art history as the story of the victory of realism over non-realism. Yet Pi argued this could only explain the relation between art and society and not the development of art. Seen on its own terms, the general development of art went from depicting reality to *xieyi*, and this development certainly did not imply a decline of artistic quality. See Pi Daojian "We Should Pay Attention to Problems of Methodology in Art Historical Research. Starting with a Popular Formula" *Meishu* 9/1982:10-13.

"action" as an alternative to rationalisation in the process of discovering the world gives a good idea of how Gu applied intuition within the context of history:

The essence of reasoning is to shut ourselves within the circle of the known., but motion breaks this circle. If we have never seen someone swimming we will probably think swimming is impossible... In fact reasoning is always to nail oneself down on dependable grounds. Yet, very simply, if I fearlessly throw myself in the water, beginning by just thrashing around I would probably be quite successful at staying above water, gradually getting adapted to the new surroundings, I might in this way learn to swim. We can see, theoretically, to try to understand things without relying on intellect is absurd; yet if we calmly acknowledge the danger, movement might untie the blind knot the intellect has tied and is unwilling to loosen.²³⁷

Huang Yongping, a graduate of the ZAFPA and central figure of the Xiamen Dada art group adopted a belligerent attitude towards all ready-made versions of history and art. His career was broken down by Gao Minglu into four distinct periods: anti-affectationism, anti-self-expression and-formalism, anti-art and anti-history.²³⁸ An example of his work during the anti-history period was his exhibit of a Chinese and a Western art history book which had been washed together for several minutes in a washing machine before being displayed.

Ding Fang defused the idea of history and development by placing human action within an infinite time-space which denies the possibility of an end, and therefore of an "ultimate dialogue." The significance of the work is then no longer seen in terms of progress, but in "tragic consciousness" of humanity in a context where "before even moving, we have already pre-realised the meaninglessness of this 'act' within history itself."²³⁹

This sense of tragedy at the same time appears as a "tragic consciousness within the painting: It is not just our concern for the fate of the ordinary "person", but is a profound experience of the intemporal motion of their fate within eternal existence. It awsomey illuminated such a fate: even if there was eternal life it would still be a process because it would never have a purpose, its motion is only a piling up of traces of past motions, so the

²³⁷ Bergson quoted in Gu Wenda "Art Diary" *Huajia* 1/1985:2. (translated directly from the Chinese.)

²³⁸ Gao Minglu 1991:337-352.

²³⁹ Ding Fang "Red Brigade Manifesto" *Meishu Sichao* 1/1987:14-15.

essential meaning of any of its progress is not in any advance, but in a piling up of [our] common great dreams within different time-spaces.

Within infinity, the idea of progress then ceases to be meaningful, and the irresistible human will to keep struggling takes on a tragic quasi-religious meaning.

The establishment of the possibility of a work having meaning and uniqueness to a certain extent required a rejection of existing perceptions of art history and theory. This was especially true in China where art theorists often spoke about the "laws of history" (历史规律) and "historical inevitability" (历史必然性).

This way of thinking was soon to be thoroughly revised by Yang Xiaoyan (b.1957), an art history research student at the Guangzhou Academy of Art. Yang thought there could be no more a discouraging prospect of art history than one which unfolds according to motions and laws, for such a history totally wipes out the role of personality and chance, and so makes any "choice" meaningless.²⁴⁰ He argued that the slogan "theory guides practice" was no longer acceptable because it was just concerned with what art should be rather than what it actually is. He traced the source of this view of history to Hegel who saw development as the unfolding of the "ultimate principle". Such ideas were so imbedded that Yang believed:

...it is impossible to restart without making a careful criticism of the system which I previously accepted and without realising the compellingness of external knowledge on my own thoughts. I believe that to choose one must return to the starting point.

In a subsequent article, Yang Xiaoyan together with Shao Hong (d.o.b.unknown) reviewed the methodology of art history in order to establish its meaning.²⁴¹ They emphasised that there could be no ultimate criteria for evaluating art works, furthermore the art historian's work was not to find some "geometrical" pattern of art history to guide future development. "Because of the unrepeatability of art actions, art historians' summary of the

²⁴⁰ Yang Xiaoyan "The Choices We Face" *Meishu* 1/1986:4-7

²⁴¹ Yang Xiaoyan and Shao Hong "The Meaning of Art History" *Meishu* 6/1986:57- 62

past art actions could not form a precondition to determine future art actions". On the contrary, the art historian's work should be limited to description and explanation.

Here, he also stressed there was no single criteria (such as politics or economics) for understanding developments in art but that generally art should be viewed within the field of culture as a whole, consisting of politics, economics, religion, science, ways of artistic expression, knowledge and moral customs. The relative importance of these criteria on social change vary according to different periods.²⁴²

By the late eighties, artists and critics had re-established a context in which new work could have meaning, and where choice was important. It is ironic, however, that to free themselves from the old framework of "inevitability" they had to re-enact in less than a decade the development of over a hundred years of modern Western art and also review the whole development of art history in the "West". In the end they were left with no clear paths of development. Art became to a certain extent free of time, and time became a relative idea that different individuals imposed on it.²⁴³

²⁴² See also Yang Xiaoyan and Shao Hong "The Meaning of Art as Cultural Interpretation" *Xin Meishu* 4/1986; Yang Xiaoyan and Shao Hong "The Meaning of Logic in Art Theory" *Xin Meishu* 1+2/1987; Shao Hong "A Criticism of Art History" *Meishu* 11/1987:16-18

²⁴³ Wu Shanzhuan "Our Paintings" (part 2) *Meishu Sichao* 1/1987:22-24

Chapter 6. The South-West

The three provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou have quite different cultural characteristics to the more traditional Han centres. These provinces were on the periphery of Han culture, contain many ethnic minorities and border onto other ethnic groups with quite different cultural civilisations, such as the Thais and Tibetans. Yunnan was for a long time outside the Chinese domain, and during the Tang dynasty it even became a powerful, independent kingdom (Nanzhao kingdom). Sichuan has an extremely long cultural history, and in terms of painting, it was probably the richest of the three, with a tradition dating back to the Tang and Five dynasties when the academy of painting was set up. By the nineteenth century, however Sichuan artists had little nationwide influence.

These provinces became more central to Chinese culture in the twentieth century with the Westward move of intellectuals and institutions during the Japanese war when institutions were established in Kunming and the Guomindang Government had its capital in Chongqing. This development laid the base for the growth of art in the South-West. Although most institutions subsequently returned to their cities of origin, and many of the artists followed suit, some of them none the less remained in place, forming in order of importance the Sichuan Academy of Art²⁴⁴, the Yunnan Art Academy²⁴⁵ and the Guizhou Normal University Art Department.²⁴⁶ The expansion of the Chinese Artists Association in these

²⁴⁴ The Sichuan Academy of Art was formed from two previous academies: The South-West People's Art Academy [Xinan Renmin Yishu Xueyuan] established in 1949, and the Chengdu Normal Art University [Chengdu Yishu Zhuanke Xuexiao] established in 1938. In 1953 the Chengdu Yizhuan painting and applied art departments were merged with the the South West People's Art Academy art dept to form the South West Yizhuan. It was renamed Sichuan Academy of Art in 1959. The academy stopped classes during the Cultural Revolution and resumed them in 1974. It started admitting research students in 1979: *A Collection of Concise Histories of Chinese Art Academies* 1991:483

²⁴⁵ First came into existence in 1951 as the art department of the Kunming Normal University. In 1959 it was separated from the University, and moved to its own site becoming the Yunnan Art Academy. Departments included music, fine art, drama and dance. In 1962 the academy was closed and the departments returned to Kunming Normal University. The restoration of the academy was agreed on in 1978, and in 1980 teachers and students returned to the Academy. *Ibid*

²⁴⁶ Guizhou Normal University Art Dept. Established in 1950 from the body of the Guizhou Shiyuan Yishu Zhuanxiuke. Music and art department. 1956 ceased classes. Resumed classes in 1984 *Ibid*: 183

provinces²⁴⁷ in the Post-Mao period also created a broad base of amateur artists and gave rise to the regional Sichuan woodcuts in the fifties.

6.1 The Periphery

One factor that often crops up in conversation when discussing the relation between Chinese and other cultures is the extraordinary power of Chinese to absorb and assimilate other cultures. Even when China has been conquered by foreign invaders, such as the Mongols and Manchus, it is they who took up Chinese culture at the expense of their own, rather than vice-versa.²⁴⁸ Chinese culture and civilisation have then been thought of as the highest in the world. When the British first sent an Macartney to China in 1793 to seek to establish diplomatic ties between the two countries, the Qianlong emperor treated them much the same as other "barbarians" sending tributes, and saw nothing that the British could possibly contribute to his empire. China embodied an ideal of order, and its relation to other ethnic groups was of peaceful coexistence unless they threatened China. In many areas it was assumed that these groups would naturally be absorbed into China as they became increasingly civilised.

In the early century, when China was redefined as a nation-state its new leaders (such as Sun Yat-sen) had to acknowledge that it existed as a multi-cultural and multi-national state. The centre's relation to its border regions then changed considerably, and the question of how to properly integrate frontier regions and ethnic minorities into Han China had to be addressed. The ideology of nationalism, adopted to unify and mobilise the Chinese people was not generally sympathetic to the idea of a multi-cultural, multi-national state. The

²⁴⁷ First established in March 1953 as South-West Art Workers Association. The scope of its activity was to open up art organisation and creation in Yunnan, Guizhou, Tibet, Xikang, and Sichuan. In 1954 its name was changed to the Chongqing branch of the Chinese Artists Association. In 1958 new branches were set up in Yunnan and Guizhou, and the associations work became limited to Sichuan. It changed its name to the present name in 1962. The Association ceased working during the Cultural Revolution and resumed work in the early eighties. *The Art Collection of China. 1949-1989* Guangxi Meishu Chubanshe 1991:106

²⁴⁸ The ethnic minority art historian E. Surutai (b.1940) recently raised the point that greater recognition should be given to the contributions of ethnic minorities to Chinese culture. Assimilation was not just a one-way process but a form of interaction. E Surutai "The Position of Ethnic Minority Art in China" *Meishu* 27/1984: 24+41

Guomindang tended to give little importance to the rights of the ethnic minorities, placing greater value on the territorial integrity of China. They viewed the ethnic minorities within China's borders as proportionally insignificant subgroups that would eventually become totally assimilated.²⁴⁹

The Communists' approach changed considerably with the times. The 1922 Manifesto of the 2nd CCP Congress proclaimed "the equality of all nationalities". Almost ten years later, the constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic of 7 November 1931 even allowed for their right to secede.²⁵⁰ This policy, however, was eliminated in 1935 for fear of foreign powers setting up puppet states. Meanwhile, although all nationalities were proclaimed "equal" they were nevertheless not excluded from the Marxist interpretation of history and from the "international/global" struggle for human emancipation through class struggle. Their goals and aspirations were therefore deemed the same as those of the Han majority, and the Communist Party as a world ideology saw as its role to educate other nationalities in its ideology and to help them fight feudal system and slave society.²⁵¹

The idea of equality with difference was symbolised by the building of the National Minorities Cultural Palace in Beijing, completed in 1959. There, all the minorities are represented, but nevertheless, the ideals of the state were clearly established with a huge inscription at the entrance proclaiming their unity.

The integration of the periphery in Chinese art was also a long and complex process. In literati painting, landscape was often seen as a symbol of order that embodied the ideal of man in harmony with nature. As a result nature could be seen as imposing or monumental, but rarely as wild. The geographical topography of China does vary considerably and is reflected in the difference between Northern Song monumental landscape painting and

²⁴⁹ Mackerras, Colin *China's Minorities. Integration and Modernisation in the Twentieth Century* Hong Kong University Press 1994:53-61

²⁵⁰ *Ibid* 72-73

²⁵¹ In art this found application in the depiction of ethnic minorities. Stalin's idea of artists as engineers of the soul was brought up in the Yunnan Ten exhibition conference in the context of Zhang Jianzhong's painting Mosuo Woman Production Team Leader which was praised for depicting her a jumping straight from primitive society straight into the spiritual state of the social phase of socialism.

Southern Song landscapes.²⁵² Nevertheless, the emphasis on brushstrokes and the ideal of the overall view or principles of nature tended to give precedence to the *yijing* realm of the mind rather than physical resemblance. Close correspondence, as depicted in European painting and prints was seen as vulgar. As the Qing dynasty painter, Zou Yigui wrote, "these [European] painters have no brush-manner whatsoever; although they possess skill, they are simply artisans and cannot be classified as painters".²⁵³

The ideals of the literati world which landscape painting tended to reflect were common to the cultural élite rather than regional. Painters in China's cultural peripheries showed little trace of local cultural difference. Although, for example, the Yunnan painter Dan Dang (1593-1673), a contemporary of Dong Qichang, depicted local scenes, he did so very much through the mind and with the brush language of the literati so that very little is identifiable as local except through the inscriptions.²⁵⁴ His concerns were the same as those of literati elsewhere. "Regional schools", as they existed in Chinese painting tended towards different ideals and lineages of painting associated with particular places or people rather than local cultural differences.

The ideal world of the literati remained central to Chinese painting, and civilisation was then a major symbolic theme. The border regions of China were generally excluded from pre-twentieth century Chinese art. Non-Chinese rarely featured in painting, except in court-commissioned paintings of barbarians paying tribute. They began to appear in the popular culture of the early 18th century in print and painting albums that gave accounts of the life of ethnic minorities. Such works often portrayed ethnic minorities as exotic and wild. Depiction of scenes of violence, scenes set in wild surroundings and scenes showing loose sexual morality would naturally contrast with Chinese values of civilisation.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Shang Hui and Yuan Ding "Regional Landscapes and the Styles and Schools of Chinese Landscape Painting" *Duo Yun* number 34, 3/1992:14-23.

²⁵³ Quoted in Sullivan, M *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* London 1953.

²⁵⁴ Huang Miaozi "Dan Dang's Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting" *Wenwu* 4/1979

²⁵⁵ Diamond, Norma "Defining the Miao. Ming, Qing and Contemporary Views" in Harrell, Stevan *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* University of Washington Press, USA 1995:101-104.

The image of minorities and border landscapes began to change in the twentieth century. The importation of naturalist, realist and impressionist styles put greater importance on depicting landscape as it appeared to the eye. The Communist party also made an effort to view the minorities as equals. The Long March took the Red Army through minority areas, and certain minorities began to be perceived and depicted as allies of communism. Their fight against oppression was identified with the communist cause in the cartoon pictures of Huang Zhen (b.1908), later to become minister of foreign affairs of the PRC (fig 6.01).²⁵⁶

The changes in artistic conventions and perception of the periphery brought a great change to depiction. Mao's emphasis on industrialisation and man's victory over nature also changes this. Inhospitable areas were areas to be developed, as depicted in Zhan Jianjun's picture New Settlers on Virgin Lands (fig 6.02). The glamorisation of the frontiers was the specific reason for the existence and rise of the Great Northern Wasteland school of printing in the late fifties.

The ideal of progress and liberation among the minorities also became a main theme for the rise of the Sichuan school of printing. In the early fifties artists spent a great deal of time in the minorities mountain districts, often as aid workers. The prints they created ranged from almost documentary pictures showing an interest in local scenery and lifestyle (fig 6.03), but the better known images are those of the early sixties which have a more didactic or propaganda content (fig 6.04).²⁵⁷

Regionalisation was similarly important for *guohua* painting. In the 50's the movements to sketch in the countryside brought the movement to depict nature directly closer to fruition, although many pictures (even the later pictures of Zhao Wangyun and the Chang'an School) still tended to be somewhat conceptualised. In relation to the peripheries, depiction still remained as it was, with few local artists. Among the elder generation, figure painting and Wu Zuoren's camels, Ye Qianyu's Tibetan dancers, and Huang Zhou's depiction of minorities spring to mind, but there was little in terms of landscape, and few landscape

²⁵⁶ See "Drawings on the Long March" *China Pictorial* 11/1962.

²⁵⁷ Lin Chengwei and Lin Yan *The History of the Development of Sichuan New Print Art* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992.

painters emerged from the three Southwestern provinces. The best known Sichuan painters were Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) who left China and Feng Jianwu (b.1910), Shi Lu's brother, whose landscapes shared some of the qualities of the Chang'an school.

In the 1980's the older and more traditional landscape painter Chen Zizhuang (b.1913) was rediscovered (fig 6.05). His career had been setback by his connections with the Guomindang and his irascible personality. Now, however with the return of traditional fashion in landscape painting, Chen was back in favour. Although his painting was also quite conceptualised he became a new model for Sichuan painters. His student Li Huasheng (b.1944) went on to successfully develop this direction in the eighties (fig 6.06).²⁵⁸

Paintings of the periphery continued to be popular in the early eighties. There were a great many pictures depicting ethnic minorities in the 30 Years Since the Foundation of the State Exhibition (1980). Trips to the countryside were usual for artists to mix with and get closer to the people. But it was also in the countryside, and especially in the more remote areas that artists could experiment with freer styles.²⁵⁹ Many of the pictures were then by Beijing artists who had a chance to travel, such as Song of the Plateau by Zhan Jianjun which shows a Tibetan girl riding a yak, framed by a bright red sunset. More linear and decorative styles that were to become typical of Yunnan however, were also represented by Liu Shaohui's (b.1940) pictures Zhao Shutun (fig 6.07).²⁶⁰

Among the second generation Yunnan had become a place of exile for a number of non-conformist Beijing artists: Yao Zhonghua (b.1939) and Jiang Tiefeng (b.1938), were graduates of the oil painting and printmaking departments of the Central Academy; Ding

²⁵⁸ Silbergeld, J with Gong Jisui *Contradictions. Artistic Life, the Socialist State and the Chinese Painter Li Huasheng* University of Washington Press 1993

²⁵⁹ The artist Luo Erchun (b.1929), for example, talked of his sketching trips of 1972, and of trying to capture different impressions of nature in what amounted to Post-Impressionist styles. Styles which he then openly developed in the eighties Luo Erchun "A Few of My Paintings of Countryside Scenes" *Meishu* 2/1983:43
Liu Shaohui "Feeling. Personality. Formal Beauty" *Meishu* 1/1979 and Yao Zhonghua "Feelings About Going Deep Into Life" *Meishu* 2/1979

²⁶⁰ This was an illustration of the tale of the Dai prince Zhao Shutun who, while lost in a forest, met a peacock princess. He took her back to his kingdom where they were to be married, but before this happened the prince was called away to war. In his absence, his father consulted a witch doctor who advised him to send her away. Back from the war, the prince discovered what had happened and followed the princess to the peacock kingdom. This story was turned into an opera in the sixties and a version of it won a national award in the seventies. For another illustration of a Dai tale see Wan Qianglin and Chen Qi's Langaxihe published in *Banhu* *Yishu* 11 (10/1983)

Shaoguang (b.1939) and Liu Shaohui had attended the Central Academy of Art and Design.²⁶¹ All were to become members of important Yunnan artist groups which held exhibitions in the early eighties.

The Monkey group held an exhibition in the Yunnan Museum from 30/7 to 17/8/1980. The exhibition included 126 works by 23 artists. The exhibition review stressed the importance of art following its own laws, but also stressed that the formal experiments and innovations were not due to any "isms" and were not parting company from content, but were in order to better express content.²⁶² Chen Zhichuan's (b.1940) gouache painting June Snow (fig 6.08) shows how highly decorative formal experiments could still convey new content. Chen has used the red face of a traditional opera figure - a symbol of snow or thunder as to express the sky in the picture.

The success of the Monkey Year group led to the Yunnan Ten exhibition in Beijing from 29/8 to 18/9 1981, in which about 120 works were exhibited. Examples of the work of Liu Shaohui, Wang Jinyuan (b.1939), Jiang Tiefeng, He Neng (b.1942), Zhang Jianzhong (b.1938), Yao Zhonghua, Liu Ziming (b.1927) and Li Zhongxiang (1940) were reproduced in *Meishu* 10 and 11 of 1981. The mixture of works and artists in the exhibition was quite unusual: Liu Ziming (fig 6.09) studied in Paris between 1949 and 1956 and worked in a very terse style with broad areas of single colours defined by dark outlines;²⁶³ Yao Zhonghua showed a similar tendency in his oil paintings, but his outlines were coloured and he had a greater sense of movement; Wang Jinyuan, a graduate of the Central Academy, adapted *guohua* bird and flower painting to the tropical setting of Yunnan, filling his pictures with a dense tangle of tropical plants. His work eventually won a silver award at the 6 NAE (fig 6.10);²⁶⁴ Li Zhongxiang worked in water printed woodcuts, and was one of the main promoters of the Yunnan woodcut movement in the eighties; Jiang Tiefeng and Liu Shaohui

²⁶¹ For their non-conformist activities during the sixties see Andrews 1994:213 and 220. See also Cohen, Joan Lebold *The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986* New York 1987:70 -76

²⁶² The exhibition was reviewed in Zhou Liangpei "Painting as an Expression of A Way of Life" *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1981:67

²⁶³ Yao Zhonghua "A Tiny Black Room. Liu Ziming and Her Art." *Meishu* 3/1985:8-10

²⁶⁴ Wang Jinyuan "The Quest for the Beauty of 'Wild Nature'" *Meishu* 12/1986

worked in heavy colour painting. Jiang's paintings were criticised for excessive abstraction and formalism (fig 6.11).²⁶⁵

A common feature of the artists in this exhibition was their decorative approach. A number of these Beijing graduates subsequently emigrated to the United States where they painted highly decorative pictures with gouache on Korean paper, a type of painting with "heavy colour" which came to be associated with Yunnan.²⁶⁶

Bolder styles and depictions of the minority people also began to appear in the works of Sichuan artists. Students were given a choice of where to go to draw inspiration from life. Where as the more realist-minded artists such as Gao Xiaohua (b.1955) chose factories and oil fields, others such as Zhou Chunya (b.1955) and Zhang Xiaogang (b.1958) chose the minority areas, where contact with nature and different lifestyle drew them away from realism and closer to Post-Impressionism. Zhou Chunya from the Sichuan academy printmaking department, who spent much time in the Ahba Tibetan region of Sichuan, was one of the earliest to become noticed through his picture The New Generation of Tibetans (fig 6.13) exhibited in the 2nd National Youth Exhibition 1980/81. Zhang Xiaogang's Clouds in the Sky (fig 6.14) was exhibited in the Sichuan Art exhibition 1982 (Beijing).²⁶⁷

Their more realist colleagues, Gao Xiaohua, Luo Zhongli, and Cheng Conglin began to depict scenes of the countryside where they spent their formative years as rusticated youths. With time they began to be less political in content and more concerned with the day to day life of ordinary people. By the time the second Sichuan oil painting exhibition was held in Beijing in 1984, Cheng Conglin was creating such uncontroversial works as Brother and Sister (fig 6.15). The general opinion was their pictures both failed to capture the current changes in society and were lacking in the combination of dramatic subject matter and

²⁶⁵ Shi Bei "Researching Form Laws, Searching for painting Language - Memo of the 'Yunnan Ten Exhibition' Conference. *Meishu* 11/1981:61

²⁶⁶ See Cohen, Joan Lebold *The Yunnan School*. and also Gladney, Dru "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities" *Journal of Asian Studies* no53 (1/1994):91

²⁶⁷ A similar movement also took place in Yunnan where Mao Xuhui (b.1955) a graduate of the Yunnan Academy of Art spent much time sketching in the Guishan mountains.

historical timing that had characterised their previous success.²⁶⁸ Without this combination the pictures lost much of their impact and turned into ornate naturalism. As with the case of Gao Xiaohua's Early Spring, Old Forest (fig 6.16) the pictures were no longer ideologically challenging, but still allowed for a passive political interpretation.²⁶⁹

The allure of the minority people was reflected even more strongly in Yunnan woodcut prints, which in the eighties went through a regionalist movement similar to what had earlier occurred in Sichuan. The 8th National Print exhibition (27/7-11/8 1983) saw several artists from Yunnan winning prizes,²⁷⁰ such as Hao Ping (b.1952) The Sound of Mortar and Pestle (fig.6.17) and Peng Xiao (b.1951) Home of the Golden Peacock. This was followed by successes in the 6th National art exhibition 1984, where People of Lahu Nationality (fig.6.18) by Zhen Xu (b.1959) won a gold award and Weaving by Chen Yongle (b.1944) won a bronze.²⁷¹ A large contingent of Sichuan artists such as Li Huanmin, Xu Kuang and Ah Ge also won prizes. Two years later, in the 9th National Print Exhibition (18/10-30/10/1986) Lü Min (b.1962), Zhen Xu, He Kun (b.1962) (fig.6.19) and Zeng Xiaofeng all won prizes.²⁷² Finally in the 7th National Art Exhibition 1989, Wei Qicong (b.1956) won a gold award, He Kun a silver and a number of other artists won bronzes.

The depiction of minorities in Yunnan woodcuts was quite varied. Hao Peng's work was fresh because it did not glorify or modernise the minorities. They are seen going about their daily tasks in simple surroundings, devoid of the usual smiles towards the viewer. Zhen Xu's picture was well received for different reasons. He depicted the minorities in a kind of naive, decorative style making the most of decorative dress patterns, while at the same time he reversed the colour order of reduction printing, by printing the darker colours first, making

²⁶⁸ Wang Xiaojian and Chen Wei "Some Opinions on the Oil Paintings of the Sichuan Academy of Art-Conference Notes" *Meishu*

²⁶⁹ The old cartoonist, Cai Ruohong singles this out as his favourite picture in the exhibition and struggles to give it a political interpretation by saying the artist has set out the figure's predicament and state of mind through his depiction of the surrounding environment. See "Exploring Exploration. After Seeing the Oil Paintings and Prints of the Sichuan Academy of Art" *Meishu* 6/1984:10-13

²⁷⁰ *Banhua Yishu* 12/1983, *Meishu* 10/1983 *Banhua Yishu* 19 Hao Peng

²⁷¹ *Meishu* 3/1984 to 4/1985

²⁷² *Banhua Yishu* 21, 3/1987

the colours dense and vivid. The exoticism of his depiction was taken even further in Lü Min's Douanier Rousseau like prints, where the Wa figure is pictured with blue skin.

Unusual use of colour and mysterious atmosphere became the speciality of the city of Simao artists Wei Qicong and He Kun. Due to the fact that they are almost self-taught and live in a fairly isolated area (two days' bus-ride away from Kunming, the provincial capital), they developed very unique personal styles. Although they also do series of prints, these are not illustrations, and do not use folk myths or have a reoccurring plot. He's unnatural use of colour is evident in pictures such as Flowing Light (fig 6.19) where it almost becomes surreal. The fading light of the weak sun barely lights up the sky, and yet the bright red earth glows with an energy of its own.

Wei Qicong used the theme of sunlight and explores its uses in relation to our psychological perception and expectations of colour in a series of pictures called Black Sun I 1986 which almost tend towards abstraction. In Autumn Evening II (fig 6.20), however, we can see a similar combination of natural and ambiguous depiction. The two faces in profile are the first things we notice about this picture. Focusing on them, the picture looks normal, but if we look beyond them we see a green sun floating in a black sky, whereas what seemed like a hill behind the figures becomes a simple cloud like green slab of colour, and the peculiar tree is but an insubstantial outline of bright red light. The picture shows us recognisable symbols, but the way these are shown undermines our preconceptions of normality.²⁷³

Use of decorative patterns and images of ethnic art, was also another feature of Southwest art. A number of minority folk art exhibitions renewed interest in its possibilities.²⁷⁴ This was especially true of Guizhou-based artists, a number of whom held an event for learning from ethnic minority art which led to an exhibition in the National Art

²⁷³ The Simao artists made a brief venture into the new art movement in 1987 with a joint exhibition held at the Yunnan art museum, which included an installation by Zhang Xiaochun.

²⁷⁴ The variety of traditions in these exhibitions was impressive. There were excellent brightly coloured Thai brocades and wall-hangings, minority clothes and a selection of brightly painted wooden, clay and gourd masks. More curious and fascinating than these were the sculptures. The Wa sculpture is simple but expressive, but the Jingpo sculptures are really quite bizarre. One consists of a wooden construction decorated with red, black and white patterns. Onto this structure are fastened small multi-coloured cloth squares and large wooden birds. See Welsh, Eduardo *Yunnan Woodcut Prints 1980 to 1990* Edinburgh University M.A thesis 1991:21-24

Museum (06-25/07/82). Many of the sculptures, such as *Miao Girl* (fig 6.21) by Tian Shixin (b.1941) show as more interest in the customs and dress of the minorities than in their art.²⁷⁵ This direction of borrowing from minority arts was followed up by Pu Guochang (b.1937) who came to general attention when he exhibited with some ex-Central Academy artists in the Ban Zaizi exhibition (13-26/10/1985).²⁷⁶ Pu Guochang exhibited woodcarved boards with subjects of the minority people painted over with bold colours (fig 6.22). The boards would have originally been used for prints, but Pu found the boards themselves more fascinating and richer in texture because of the depth and variety of the cuts. Dong Kejun (b.1939), another Guizhou-based artist held a solo exhibition in Beijing 1988. Dong's prints were influenced by the liveliness of minority art, but its general conception is based in modernist concerns about form.

In general, absorption of artistic conventions of the ethnic minorities were not many or thorough. The use of patterns was often merely decorative and became something of a formula. As Deng Qiyao (b.1952) observed "several years ago someone ironically classified Yunnan woodcuts into two schools: the wax gourd school and the winter melon school" according to whether the artist elongated his figures or made them squarish and stocky.²⁷⁷ Like the grottoes of Dunhuang, ethnic minority art provided another source of formal modernism and also a local flavour that could be differentiated from other provinces.

The themes of the customs of ethnic minorities, however, also reflected different concerns and lifestyle values of local artists. Many began to take an intense interest in the lifestyles of the minorities to the point where their accounts are almost like ethnological studies.²⁷⁸ The life of the minorities and their art symbolised greater freedom, both from politics and convention. Whereas some looked to the past as an alternative theme to the

²⁷⁵ Wang Keqing "Guizhou Wood Sculpture and Its Earthy Atmosphere" *Meishu* 10/1982

²⁷⁶ Meaning already lived half one's life, also an attitude of modesty that one's art is not yet mature. Their activities were frozen for ten years when they came out of the academies. *Meishu* 12./1985, *Zhongguo Meishubao* 17/1985, *Jiangsu Huakan* 3/1986.

²⁷⁷ Deng Qiyao "The Imaginative Transformation of Space" *Meishu* 8/1987.

²⁷⁸ Jia Guozhong "Song of Life, Song of the Totem" *Banhua Yishu* 31(3/1990).

present, the minorities also provided a form of escape from central concepts. This is even true in the field of *guohua*.

The criteria of *guohua* were so thorough it would be difficult to break away or create a more regional difference. In these terms, the paintings of Wang Jinyuan although portraying the local scenery were still largely conventional. Pu Guochang's works, however, embodied a more thorough rebellion against the tradition and centralised standards (fig 6.23). Pu argued that it was necessary to destroy standards of beauty in order to be able to re-discover beauty in life. In this respect his pictures of minority people do not confine them to a pre-modern conventional ethnic setting, but shows them enjoying some of the benefits of modern life (without being propaganda). Pu's rebellion against the standards of *guohua* was reminiscent of the idea of destroying concepts of fineness and vulgarity in painting. His bright use of colours is taken from folk art, and his subject matter was also usually derived from local culture and life.

Even further from convention were the works of the young Simao artist He Kun (fig 6.24). He Kun learnt *guohua* painting from a local teacher and largely developed his techniques himself. Far away from the academies and centres of traditional painting he was hardly ever bothered by the discourse of the boundaries of *guohua*, and was happy enough that people liked his work.

6.2 Art and the Ethnic Minorities

Apart from figuring as a popular subject of art, ethnic minorities also took an active part in creating art. During the fifties, efforts were also made to bring the minorities to participate in the process of picture creation. In Sichuan a special minorities class was formed in 1956 at the middle school affiliated to the Sichuan Academy of Art. The class took in children "from the bottom layer of society" of the Tibetan, Yi, Qiang, Miao, Wa, Aini and Bai nationalities. Once they had graduated the students were expected to go back to their

place of origin to promote art. Two of the students later became very well known, the Tibetan artist Qijia Dawa (b.1946) and Miao artist Ah Ge (b.1948).²⁷⁹

The Minority Arts Exhibition in the Autumn of 1977 was one of the first major exhibitions to take place after the downfall of the Gang of Four.²⁸⁰ Held in the National Art Museum in Beijing to commemorate 35 years since Mao's Yan'an talks, it included 240 works, made by artists of twenty nine ethnic minorities from the four provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Tibet.

The works were varied in medium and technique. In terms of subject matter, many of the themes were familiar ones and fall into two main categories. One was that of the close unity between nationalities, and especially the leadership closeness to the minorities: The Great Leader Chairman Mao and Beloved Premier Zhou Together with the National Minorities, an oil Painting by the Mongolian artist Wang Qin (b.1928) and the woodcut Chairman Hua and Liberated Serfs, Heart to Heart (fig 6.25) by the Miao artist Ah Ge. The second theme is the improvement in the life of the ethnic minorities: Liberated Slaves Have Aspirations (fig 6.26) woodcut by Qijia Dawa and Returning Home After Graduation (fig 6.30) woodcut by the Yi artist Li Xiu (b.1943). Some of these works are also collaborations between minority artists, and between minority and Han artists. The most interesting of these is Night Never Sets on Both Banks of the Wujiang River (fig 6.27) a collective *guohua* by Dong, Hui and Buyi nationality artists. This busy picture contains a bridge, an aqueduct, a dam, a tunnel, a dam and plenty of buildings, factories, roads, lorries, boats and construction cranes. The whole valley has been transformed into an industrial "paradise", a sleepless hive of activity.

An unusual feature of many of the pictures is that they included inscriptions in ethnic nationality languages. Eulogy, (fig 6.28) a *guohua* painting by Miao artist Long Qinglian (b.1938), and Rage (fig 6.29) a woodcut print by Yi artist Luo Zhengyou (b.unknown) are two interesting examples. Although the exhibition is meant to commemorate the Yan'an talks

²⁷⁹ Lin Chengwei and Lin Yan *A History of the Development of New Sichuan Print Art* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992:196-197.

²⁸⁰ 20/10-20/11/1977

the inscriptions in the background banners in both cases are about denouncing the "Gang of Four". In the former picture, the figure in national dress holding up a traditional musical suggests the joy of Xinjiang people at being able to return to traditional ethnic customs, suppressed by the Gang of Four. In the second case, the title and the stridency of the men with raised fists suggest both a sense of great ethnic pride and a sense of outrage bordering on militancy. The content of these pictures suggests an underlying reason for the exhibition: to pacify or reassure the ethnic minorities giving them a space to condemn the gang of four who had suppressed minorities culture.

The main review of this exhibition emphasised several points.²⁸¹ It stated the need to carry out socialist revolution and socialist construction as being to "uphold the unity of the nation (祖国), to strengthen the unity (团结) of the people of each nationality". It recognised the contribution of the minorities who live on the borders of China in "protecting the unity and territorial integrity of the nation" and hence the importance of "actively developing the cultural cause (事业)" while simultaneously helping the economic and political development. It reminded people of the Party's role in promoting the art of the minorities, stating that "after Liberation, under the radiant guidance of the Party's nationalities policy, many minorities had their first generation of art workers". It gives the example of the Uigurs, Khazaks, Kirgiz and Tajiks of Xinjiang whose pre-liberation artistic development, despite their long tradition in applied arts, had been greatly hampered because it had been destroyed by the reactionary ruling class and fettered by feudal superstitious ideology. By contrast, they were now developing very quickly, their works reflecting the "united struggle of people of all nationalities and moving scenes of opposing modern revisionism".

Regarding the Cultural Revolution, the article recognised the negative role of the Gang of Four in destroying the art and customs of the ethnic minorities. It complained that songs and dances which had "national character and socialist content" had been described by the Gang as "running wild" (泛滥成灾), "singing merrily and dancing gracefully",

²⁸¹ Fine arts research group of the art department of the Central Minorities Academy "Actively Develop the Art of the Minority Nationalities" *Meishu* 4/1977:9-10.

"exotic" and, "foreign" (外来) and "retrogressive". The article then contrasted this with Chairman Hua's positive policies towards the national minorities.

This exhibition also provided an opportunity to publish a number of articles about the situation of ethnic minority art in other areas. Among these, the article by the Mongolian artist Guan Bu (b.1928) also heavily criticised the Gang of Four.²⁸² Guan Bu criticised the patronising attitude of the Gang in wanting to "take care of" the national minorities. He said the minorities needed no such taking care of and accused the Gang of discrimination, citing the fact that Exhibition held to commemorate the twenty fifth anniversary of the nation, included not a single work from Mongolia.²⁸³ He disagreed with their argument that this was to maintain national standards. He maintained that the national minorities were both outnumbered and disadvantaged, so to ask for them to compete on the same terms was to take away any chance they had left. In any case, he argued that "national standards" had simply meant complying with the gang's criteria, whereas actually: "there is no single criterion, each nationality has its own criteria".

Despite this, most of the pictures appeared no different to those of Han artists, and largely fulfilled the expectations of propaganda pictures. Nonetheless, some of their pictures could also be said to be autobiographical. Li Xiu was a product of Han education. Her father was a famous Yi novelist, and Li was schooled at the Yunnan Art College middle school and subsequently went to the Guangxi Art Academy.²⁸⁴ This may have provided the inspiration for her picture Returning Home After Graduation (fig 6.30).

Qijia Dawa's childhood was not so fortunate. He lost both parents as a child and went begging with his grandmother. He then became a monk at a lamasery where he was beaten up and made to work in inhuman conditions. According to the article by Li Shaoyan, his life finally took for the better when democratic reforms were carried out in Tibet and at the age of fourteen he was admitted into the "ethnic [minorities] class" of the Sichuan Art Academy.

²⁸² Guan Bu "The Gang of Four' were Murderers Who Strangled the Art of the Ethnic Minorities" *Meishu* 4/1977.

²⁸³ This issue of *Meishu* (4/1977) also carries several articles concerning ethnic minority art from various different provinces.

²⁸⁴ Wu Dehui "Soil. Feeling. Art. Li Xiu, the Woman Yi nationality Artist and Her Work" *Meishu* 12/1985

A series of woodcuts entitled My Childhood (figs 6.31 & 6.32) records these unfortunate years.

Luo Zhengyou ironically started creating during popularisation movement in the Cultural Revolution. He was part of an Yi team of the Liangshan mountains who became famous for a collective woodcut illustration "slaves making history". Other members of the group, including Maromujia (d.o.b.unknown) and Munayitie (d.o.b.unknown) were to win a prize for a collective mural painting in the 6NAE (fig 4.22).²⁸⁵

Another exhibition of ethnic minorities art was held in Beijing in 1982, but this one had less interesting works.²⁸⁶ The review of the exhibition was just one page long and had nothing about any individual work. The exhibition seemed to be merely an exercise in bettering the relations with the minorities, and this is born out by the way the prizes were awarded. All fifty participating nationalities were represented in the prizes awarded. Out of the 282 participating artists, 178 won prizes, and of these, 143 were members of ethnic minorities. This means that half the participating minority artists won prizes and that prizes were awarded to sixty three percent of the total number of participants.

The review contained all the usual rhetoric about the positive role of the Party in developing the art of the ethnic minorities and reported a speech by the Uigur artist Hazi Aimaiti (b.1935).²⁸⁷

"We are split into fifty different nationalities, but are all members of the Zhonghua minzu family. Closely united under the leadership of the Party with the enthusiasm of our ardent love for the motherland, our ardent love for the Party, and ardent love of Socialism, we have used our paintbrushes and woodcut knives to create even better works to serve our motherland and to serve the construction of Socialist spiritual civilisation".²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵Lin Chengwei and Lin Yan *A History of the Development of New Sichuan Print Art* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992:308

²⁸⁶ (1/1/1982 to 28/2/1982). National Minorities Exhibition

²⁸⁷ Hazi Aimaiti, an Uigur artist from Xinjiang Province had taken part in the earlier exhibition with a poster advocating learning from Dazhai. Hazi was in favour of this movement and criticised the envoy from the Gang of Four who had suggested that the minorities should chose their own way. This, he thought was going against Mao's policies.

²⁸⁸ The First All-China Minority Nationalities Art Works Exhibition' Held in Beijing from 1st January to 28th February. *Meishu* 3/1982 paintings reproduced in 4/1982

Among prize-winning artists in the second exhibition were artists who had also been prominent in the first one, such as Li Xiu (Yi) and A Ge (Miao) Qijia Dawa (Tibetan). Their early pictures often show such subjects as liberated serfs and the benefits of modernisation while their later pictures often depict ethnic minority customs.

The most important work in this exhibition was the *tanka* painting Gesar of Ling (fig 6.33). This collective painting was executed by a group of five Tibetans and four Han artists, mostly in their late thirties who had been colleagues at the Sichuan Academy of art and who now worked in the Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture. The painting was on the subject of the mythical Tibetan warrior king who can be seen to represent freedom and liberation from the bondage of ignorance, being the "King of the human mind in all its aspects".²⁸⁹

The explanation of the painting written by Renzhen Langjia (b. 1943) states that Tibetan painting was used for religious purposes but that it also encompassed other elements of life, and its unique style could be observed in other daily objects such as cloth decoration. He said they must use these forms to express the great changes in the Tibetan areas, the Tibetans' love for socialism and feeling for the Party, as well as all the healthy progress and the beautiful form and content of their life and work.²⁹⁰

This picture, however, is remarkably different from the woodcuts the artist, and another of his collaborators, Nima Zeren (b.1944) had entered for the 1977 exhibition. Renzhen describes how the picture creation process involved travelling through various districts to collect material, including a two-day horse ride over the mountains to Babang monastery to visit an eighty-year-old master of Tibetan painting to better understand the principles of *tanka* painting, as well as watching a Tibetan play on the story of Gesar. The whole process suggests a deep immersion in traditional Tibetan culture as and Renzhen writes, this was but the first step in creating "[Tibetan] ethnic" painting.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ *Gesar! The Epic Tale of Tibet's Great Warrior-King* Dharma Press 1991:ix

²⁹⁰ Renzhen Langjia "Let Ancient Tibetan Painting Radiate Vigour and Youth - Discussing the Experience of Creating King Gesar of Ling" *Meishu* 4/1982

²⁹¹ This was one of two *tankas* by the same group of artists which took part in the exhibition. The word *minzu* in Chinese can be translated as either "national" or "ethnic" according to context. Here, either could be used depending on the degree to which the artists are held to sympathise with "nationalist", i.e. pro independence projects. There is fear, however, that the Ganzi School is merely pro-Chinese propaganda painting that subverts the old tradition. (Kvaerne, Per "the Ideological Impact on Tibetan Art" in Barnett, Robert and Shirin Akiner

The Ganzi group continued to be active during the eighties, and in December 1986 the "Ganzi Tibetan Tanka Painting Exhibition" was held in Beijing. It consisted of 12 ancient paintings and 58 "new" paintings, by 23 artists, 80% of who were Tibetan. The introduction of the exhibition, however, was put under the category of folk art which seems a bit of a snub, although the style of some of the work with the use of naturalistic techniques for depicting human features (fig 6.34)²⁹² reminds one of eighties new year paintings rather than of Tibetan tradition. The article ended with the statement that while inheriting the essence of tradition the artists have liberated painting from the temple of religion and use traditional national forms to reflect the new life of the people.²⁹³

The idea of taking elements from an ancient tradition to create a "new" "national" art seemed to be common to several minorities and provided a solution to being both modern and different from the Han. To a certain extent, however, it also seemed a rejection of a part of the given culture which had originally been significant cultural markers. This was especially true with regard to religion.

The Uigur artist Kelimu Naserding (b.1947) took a similar path in the early eighties (fig 4.21). He argued that the art of Xinjiang first came to the area through Buddhism and that the murals preserved in local caves are identical in aesthetic concept to that of the local nationalities. When Islam entered the area, however, the ban on figure painting greatly hampered Uigur art. "Figures" he wrote "are an important content of painting and an important means of giving expression to the spirit of the age." He stated his main concern was in how to supplement the art history vacuum created out of religious prejudice, and how to create figure paintings with Uigur style and character. Uigur applied arts, he said were rich

(edited by) *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* Indiana University Press 1994:166-85. My thanks to C. Harris for bringing this article to my attention). While this may be true for some pictures, I would argue that others such as Gesar are far more ambiguous, and do reflect national pride. In South America the use of the word ethnic has been criticised as a language strategy to incorporate minorities into a discourse of nationalism and development which obliterates their identity and autonomy. Albó, Xavier "Our Identity Starting from Pluralism in the Base" in Beverly, John, Jose Oviedo and Michael Aronna (editors) *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America* Duke University Press 1995:25.

²⁹² The picture depicts Tangdong Jiaobu, a 14th century figure credited as the founder of Tibetan drama.

²⁹³ Collective article by the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Cultural Office "Ganzi Tibetan Tanka" *Meishu* 2/1987:51

in national style, and he was going to borrow from them try to make something that was different from Eastern tradition and also different from new Western art forms.²⁹⁴

This solution seemed similar to the type of negotiation which was also happening to the Han with relation to Western culture, the difference being that Kelimu was doing both in relation to the West and to the Han. In general the minorities seemed to tread a careful path. Though it is not surprising that no protest pictures have appeared in Chinese art focusing on ethnic problems, it is also not entirely surprising that their images of themselves are so positive.²⁹⁵ In one sense, most of them aspired to modernisation. In any case, it is unlikely that they would want themselves to be seen as being poor or backward in relation to the Han. Minority artists tend to avoid any signs which could be read as backwardness in their pictures. So, whereas in Cheng Conglin's picture (fig 6.15), the brother and sister are portrayed as being somewhat wary of the audience, and they are barefoot despite wearing beautiful clothes, minorities were likely to likely to portray themselves as being enthusiastic about modernisation, and having visual signs of prosperity. Even back in 1977, none of the pictures in the Southwest Minorities exhibition showed barefoot minorities, and in many cases they conspicuously wear trainers.

The very act of modernisation and education, however, also implied adopting new relations towards cultural roots and customs. Perception and definition of minority status differed considerably throughout the eighties, people shifting their status according to different advantages. In many cases also, such as with the Manchus, the defining lines had become almost entirely a process of "ethnic differentiation" where cultural boundaries had virtually ceased to exist.²⁹⁶ In areas where minorities were left most undisturbed, such as in the Wazu areas, people continued making cultural artifacts as before, without entering into

²⁹⁴ Abudu Kelimu Nasirding "Striving to Create a Uigur Style of Oil Painting" *Meishu* 1/1981. See also Yang Hongkui "Kelimu Nasirding. Choosing Compromise" *Meishu* 3/1987:196-214.

²⁹⁵ The only picture that seems to raise such themes was *History of the Wuzhi Mountains* by the Guangzhou artist Tang Jixiang exhibited at the 6th National Art Exhibition. The picture depicts a minority couple exhibited caged in a zoo. The picture was safe because it fell under the category of exposing the evils of the "old" society which the Communists had eradicated. Nevertheless, its presence could raise the topic of any existing prejudices. See also Harris, Clare "Struggling with Shangri-La: A Tibetan Artist in Exile" in Koran, F. *Constructing Tibetan Culture: Contemporary Perspectives* World Heritage Press 1977:160-177

²⁹⁶ Rigger, Shelley "Voices of Manchu Identity 1635 to 1935" in Harrell, Stevan *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. University of Washington Press 1995

the discourse of art, or cultural negotiation. For the most part however, the very fact of becoming an artist would mean access to education and ideas of the larger environment of China.

This journey towards the centre and growth away from one's roots can be seen in the work of Wang Huaxiang (b.1962), an artist from Guizhou, classified as belonging to the Yi nationality. Wang took part in the First National Minorities Exhibition and subsequently studied at the Central Academy print-making department. In figure 6.35 Wang chooses the scholar tree to symbolise the people of the mountains: "It is not tall and straight like a cypress or pine, nor as graceful as a willow. It silently takes root where people don't look and live tenaciously and optimistically". His images are based on his return trips to the countryside and encounters with real people. Nevertheless, these take place in a kind of strange and mysterious atmosphere, and the mountain people now represent a form of existence quite different from his own. The shepherd in figure 6.36 is seen as honest, sincere, guileless and staunch and such mountain people "seem to have no concept of past and present in their minds, only the perpetual song of nature". Thinking back over his own progress, having left the countryside in his youth and having over twenty years of education, the encounter makes him wonder:

Sometimes I think that while we are struggling hard to develop our economy and our culture, and when most cultured people seek their own values of self-realisation, there are some even more important things they have overlooked. Endless hopes and desires have changed man's soul, making people forget the essence of life²⁹⁷

6.3 The Depths of the Soul

Although the South-West provinces were on the cultural peripheries of China, they were also very much part of the Chinese art scene. In some cases there were more similarities than differences between Southwest artists and those of other areas. In relation to depicting

²⁹⁷ Wang Huaxiang "From Guizhou to the Central Academy of Art" *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1991

minorities, the average art school student and teacher's romanticised and exoticised pictures differed little from academy to academy. The problems artists faced in the cities, competition for placements and pressure to conform to certain pictorial demands of form and content were largely the same. In the end the main difference seemed to boil down to a question of distance and perspective.

Occasionally, proximity did make a real difference. Zeng Xiaofeng had had particularly long contact with the minorities. His early prints of the Ancient Dian People series showed interest in their artistic legacy and rules of depiction which might have resulted from his participation in the ethnic mural and cliff painting copying project carried out by the Yunnan Huayuan (circa 1982/3).²⁹⁸ He also spent a long time in the countryside of Guizhou and Yunnan creating popular ceramic masks as well as among the Wa people where he filled many sketch books with detailed accounts and drawings of his experience (fig 6.37). It was from these experiences, particularly from making magic folk ceramic figures that were used in a type of exorcism that Zeng developed a more animistic view of the universe:

Viewed from a special perspective, many human activities are nothing but the extension and development of shamanism. A musical concert, a dramatic tragedy, a movie, even a painting exhibition are guided by submitting to a certain unknowable power, guided by resisting an indescribable anxiety within the soul, guided by expelling inexpressible emotions from within the heart, guided by using one's limited life to transcend oneself, transcend time and space, transcend the ordinary, limited reality in the hope of reaching a balance between oneself and external forces, in the hope of attaining a kind of infinitude, an even greater world. Isn't all this but the spirit of shamanism soaring to an even higher level of existence?²⁹⁹

Zeng Xiaofeng's case is both an exception and a confirmation, a reaction to city life. It not only shows the urban artist's relation to the minorities but it is also an explicit rejection of modernisation - a search for different values that do not depend on dry material ideas of

²⁹⁸ *Yunnan Ethnic Minorities Mural Exhibition Catalogue* Beijing 1983

²⁹⁹ Zeng Xiaofeng "Shamanism, Creation, Folk Art - My Days with the Yunnan and Guizhou Rural Exorcist Artisans" *Meishujia* (Hong Kong) 68. Passage quoted in the catalogue *I Don't Want to Play Cards With Cezanne*:52

science and modernity which were somehow soulless and left people isolated. It was a rejection of the idea of "progress" when applied to human values. After all the Cultural Revolution had proved to be a human tragedy, and the material "progress" of Deng's pragmatic line offered little consolation to the troubled soul and was hardly conducive to promoting good human relations. In the words of Ye Yongqing (b.1958), another Southwest artist:

The fate of the painter is accompanied by loneliness. It is doomed. People nowadays seldom have the tendency towards attempting to understand, so there is more and more misunderstanding. History advances, the patterns of our feelings are getting more complicated, the activities of our spirit more subtle, we have opened up a number of roads in the jungle of confusion. Are they all leading to the peach-blossom paradise? It can be answered by none, and it need not be answered.³⁰⁰

To some extent this theme of questioning man's development and values became very strong in Southwest art, and in particular in the work of a group called the South-West Art Research Society which was established in Kunming in August 1986.³⁰¹ This group included Mao Xuhui, Zhang Xiaogang, Zhang Ling (b.1961), Ye Yongqing, Pan Dehai (b.1956), Su Jianghua (b.1956), Dong Qiyao among the members. Previous to this, some of them had already held important exhibitions. In June 1986 Pan Dehai, Mao Xuhui, Zhang Hong, Zhang Xiaogang, Hou Wenji and Xu Kuang held the "Yunnan. Shanghai 'New Figurative Painting Exhibition'", which subsequently travelled to Nanjing. The work was quite controversial but apparently everyone was in agreement that the artists were at least both bold and dedicated since they had raised and paid all the expenses for the exhibition themselves.³⁰²

In October 1986 the Third Figurative Painting Exhibition, with slide show and conference, was held in the Yunnan Library. The delayed Second Figurative Painting

³⁰⁰ *Huajia*

³⁰¹ This group is discussed in depth in Gao Minglu 1991:229-260, and Lü Peng and Yi Dan, Chapter 8.

³⁰² Mao Xuhui "Yunnan. Shanghai 'The New Figurative Painting Exhibition' and its Development" *Meishu* 11/1986:45

exhibition was held in Shanghai in November, and a Fourth one in the Sichuan Academy in December.

The paintings of the individual artists were both, stylistically varied, and visually provocative taking on strong social themes. "The main aim is to shock their souls, not please their eyes." Mao's works are certainly quite shocking in that they bare the hidden, private moments and even thoughts in daily life (figs 6.39 & 6.42). "New Figurative Painting" he wrote "rose from the background of a culture trampled to ruins by the Gang of Four and from the exhilaration, perplexity, inferiority complex, introspection and comparisons brought about by the opening up to the outside world and the resulting deluge of information that came in."³⁰³

Within this context his concern was not really about style or technique. The point of art was not to exist for itself, creation should not start from the desire to make "art". Art begins from life and must "loyally return to the depths of the soul and to the source of life, taking art into every corner, every blind spot". Art is "not an isolated, stereotyped partial phenomenon, it has eliminated terror and unease, it has produced the most intimate, pure, natural and noble sincerity which is humanity's mutual faith. Can we use 'love' to summarise it? Here art will manifest its whole moral force and only at this moment can it be said to have returned to itself."³⁰⁴

Art was not to be just the act of painting but the whole approach to life. In Zhang Xiaogang's view it seems to be both a way of questioning, coming to terms with and dispelling the fear this process induces. In an age when "milestones are toppling and totems turn into toys" people long for "authoritative" values which can console the "vacant soul". The soul however should not remain vacant, clinging to temporary human values. In the face of nature man is reminded of his own mortality and nature's regenerative eternity. The act of painting seems to be both an escape and a coming to terms with this greater reality as "we

³⁰³ Mao Xuhui "The Emergence and Transcendence of New Figurative Life and Figurative Painting" *Meishu Sichao* 1/1987:25

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*

forget [the forces of nature], recoiling in our mud-built coffins, finding happiness in playing with our mud-filled works". (fig 6.46)³⁰⁵

Here the role of the painting was also to be very important in communicating the artist's experience to the audience, providing a common basis for human understanding within ever-changing contexts:

People live for a long time in an idea of the world without a full understanding of the concealed inner likeness of the world. The development of material civilisation is still not enough to explain the solution of these problems. Modern science also has no way to give a comprehensive definition of such questions. Yet these problems are precisely those which every living person must seriously inquire into. This is also the reason for the existence of modern art. In this void, the artist acts as a daring vanguard, relying on the spear of intuition to go further into the abyss and blank space than the average person, but he is also more lonely. Relying on artistic methods the artist records the course and personal experience of this brief life, and this piece of spiritual wealth has given people a prototype and reference. The significance of "new exhibition" is precisely in that it attempts to call more of the audience to together seek to find the significance of life itself, and it is also precisely this ceaseless inquiry and questioning that life acquires its essential significance - the significance of people.³⁰⁶

The 1988 South-West Modern Art Exhibition, held in Chengdu was a major exhibition from these three provinces (figs 6.43 to 6.49) and it brought together artists from various art groups such as the "Red Yellow Blue" (Sichuan) South West Art Research Group (Yunnan/Sichuan), as well as Sichuan Academy graduates and a number of artists from Hunan. The works showed a strong diversity and distinct individual interests, strong visual language and puzzling riddle-like content. Among the work exhibited was Mao Xuhui's Patriarch, an image which is interesting since by extension it would also have represented the emperor as the head of the Chinese family. The use of this image was a reminder of the interpersonal relations that exist and their web like connection reaching to the central seats of power. Mao was to continue painting this series into the 90s and the imagery begins to take

³⁰⁵ Zhang Xiaogang "Seeking Out that Existence - The Second Letter that Arrived in the Night" *Yunnan Yishu Tongxun* 1/1987:18-19.

³⁰⁶ Mao Xuhui "The Emergence and Transcendence of New Figurative Life and Figurative Painting" *Meishu Sichao* 1/1987:25

on new connotations (figs 6.50 to 6.52). Sometimes the figure is reduced to an inhuman symbol of power (fig 6.50). At other times it is alone and powerless or dumbfounded, ruthless and not quite in control (fig 6.51). Then again it is placed in an awkward family setting where parents have to react to the actions of the child within a greater social context (fig 6.52).

Chapter 7: Beijing

Beijing was a vitally important centre of art in the 1980s. The national art museum was the stage for the most important large-scale exhibitions, ranging from the National Art Exhibitions to the more controversial Robert Rauschenberg Exhibition (November 1985) and the notorious China/Avant-garde Exhibition in 1989. Beijing was then a most important centre for official art through its important institutions such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and the China Art Research Centre (中国艺术研究院 founded 1953) which employed a good number of art critics and published the weekly *Zhongguo Meishubao* (July 1985-December 1989). Beijing was also slightly different from other centres as it had a large foreign community and greater opportunities to exhibit and sell works.

Aside from its artistic importance Beijing was also the political nerve centre of China, where some of the most important events of the eighties were to be played out: the demonstrations against the Gang of Four; the democracy wall movement, 1986/7 student movement; the 1989 democracy movement, and finally the latter's being put down in what is known as the June the Fourth Massacre.

7.1 Returning Art to the People

The Spring of 1979 was an unusual time in the Chinese art world. The Third Plenum, held in December 1978 was the juncture at which the leftists began to lose the struggle against Deng. Coinciding with the plenum, between November 1978 and April 1979 there was a popular movement for writing "Big Character Posters" on the "Democracy Wall" expressing different opinions, varying from praise of Deng Xiaoping to calls for democracy and human rights.³⁰⁷ There was also an upsurge of popular, unofficial poetry and political pamphlets. For a time, this freedom of expression seemed to have the backing of the CCP, and people felt encouraged to discuss problems even more openly. It was a period of great excitement when everything seemed possible.

³⁰⁷ See D. Goodman *Beijing Street Voices* London 1981 also Garside, Roger *Coming Alive: China After Mao* London 1981.

Over the Spring period there was a sudden flourish of artistic activity and between twenty and thirty exhibitions were held in parks all over Beijing.³⁰⁸ These exhibitions, organised jointly by artists, work units and the various park authorities became known as quasi-official because they broke the usual mould of state-organised events. They were also a tremendous celebration of the normalisation of the art world for many artists who had suffered the same experience of persecution.

The "New Spring" exhibition of landscapes and still lifes, held in Zhongshan park was the most prominent of these quasi-official exhibitions. It showed works by thirty-seven artists, including some of the most important artists of the older generation such as Liu Haisu, Pang Xunqin and Wu Zuoren. Their works reminded people of their early experiments in introducing Western art to China, while those of the middle-aged artists included some works in previously forbidden Impressionist styles. The exhibition had even greater influence because of the enthusiastic praise for such initiatives which the old woodcut artist Jiang Feng expressed in the preface:

This way of doing things is very good, freedom of association is stipulated in explicit terms in the constitution as the lawful right of the people, moreover painting societies are forms of organisation which are of benefit to the development of art: 1. blossoming creation; 2. promoting diversification of styles, types and themes of art works. 3. they can have the function of encouraging artists to learn from each other, compete with each other and raise standards in art. 4. Create more opportunities to take art to the masses and be evaluated by the masses. 5. They pay their own expenses and need no government supplement; they can put sale prices to solve the problem of their economic difficulties produced by their works not selling in shops and hotels not hanging oil paintings and such things which do not conform with the spirit of the hundred flowers. Painting societies, such forms which have so many advantages in developing art creation should be greatly encouraged...³⁰⁹

An important aspect of this text was the emphasis on self-sufficiency and personal initiative. Artists were encouraged to form groups, carry out their own organisation and selection system, and make economic ventures that would become increasingly independent

³⁰⁸ Lao Dai "Today's Art Circle in the Capital" *Meishu* 2/1979:48 &33.

³⁰⁹ Jiang Feng "Preface" *Spring Painting Society Catalogue* 1979

from government sponsorship. Through such "daring and energetic" exhibitions artists were described as having "returned art to the people."³¹⁰

The mentioning of this old revolutionary slogan was not without importance. It referred to the way Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four had falsely controlled the art world "in the name of the people", but it also had implications about the current situation of art and interpretations of "democracy". The official interpretation that the Party had given the people their democratic rights (e.g. Jiang Feng, Chapter 4) was contested by the democracy wall activists. The crucial divergence was that it was "the people", not the Party who were guarantors of democracy, for so long as the Party had the right to carry out a dictatorship "in the name of the people" the Gang of Four phenomenon could all too easily reoccur.

In the spring most people were still quite pleased with the recent turn of events. The reversal of the April Fifth Incident had been especially important for it had confirmed the correct role of the people in demonstrating against the Gang of Four and helping speed their downfall. Images of crowds copying "revolutionary poems" at the memorial, an event which had remained invisible, now appeared in the official press (fig 7.01). This reversal in itself had no doubt encouraged the democracy wall. Yet some people continued to be sceptical of democracy where the people had no choice in their leaders. Wei Jingshen, a worker and editor of *Exploration*, urged people not to be taken in by the "Four Modernisations" while the Party continued to neglect the most important modernisation - Democracy. "Having been duped once," he wrote, "I advise everyone not to believe such political swindlers anymore. Knowing that we are being deceived, we should implicitly believe in ourselves."³¹¹

Wei's fears proved correct. At the end of March, beginning of April there was a clampdown on the Democracy Wall. Deng formulated his Four Cardinal Principles which established the limits of dissent. Wei and several other activists were arrested, and he was subsequently tried for "spying" in November. In December the democracy wall was

³¹⁰ Lao Dai "Today's Art Circle in the Capital" *Meishu* 2/1979:48 &33.

³¹¹ Wei Jingshen "The Fifth Modernisation - Democracy" Seymour, James D. *The Fifth Modernisation. China's Human Rights Movement 1978-1979* New York 1980.

abolished, and after the National Peoples' Congress meeting in August the following year the right to put up Big Character Posters was removed from the constitution.

The March clampdown did not silence public discontent. The problems inherited from the Cultural Revolution were such that the city was filled with people trying to have the wrongs redressed. One of the most articulate groups were former Red Guard students, often sons of Party cadres, who had been sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. In many cases, they had not been allowed to return to the city or had been allocated factory jobs in the suburbs, and only a tiny minority had been allowed to resume their studies. Such youths formed a core of the writers at the Democracy Wall.

Months after the Spring atmosphere had disappeared a number of amateur artists from much the same background got together to form a group they called the "Star" Society. The Stars had missed the chance to exhibit in the Spring, and in their eagerness to have an exhibition, decided to take matters into their own hands. On September the 19th, they hung their works in a public park next to the National Art Museum without applying for permission, nor in the capacity of an officially registered group. The following day public security police stopped the exhibition and an argument ensued as to whether they had the right to exhibit there or not. During this exchange, they were accused of disturbing the peace and drawing adverse reactions from the public. At this point bystanders joined in demanding the right to be allowed to judge for themselves. Following the closure of the exhibition the Stars held a protest march together with other groups.³¹²

Two months later the Stars were given exhibition space in the Huafang studio in Beihai Park (23 /11-2/12/1979). The following year they were allowed to hold a second exhibition in the National Art Museum (24/08-07/09/1980). The works in the exhibition were different in nature from those in the Spring exhibitions. They drew on styles that went beyond the Impressionists and they sought to record the life they knew and events as they witnessed them. Picasso became their model for artistic exploration, while Kathe Kollwitz was the inspiration for the humanitarian approach of to their work. The combination provided

³¹² "From Wang Keping's Diary" *The Stars Ten Years* Hanart Gallery 1989:23

quite powerful results. One picture reveals the cramped space of an artist's studio, the only place for private thoughts and individual expression (fig 7.05). Another, a mere silhouetted bottle on a table, the company of the individual in his predicament (fig 7.04). A third picture resorts to abstraction which takes on the challenging dimension of claiming the right to self-expression (fig 7.06). The most daring exhibit, a sculpture by Wang Keping (b.1949) entitled Idol (fig 7.03) a bust of Buddha easily identifiable with Chairman Mao, was censored from the exhibition.

The Stars exhibitions had a powerful impact on the public. The spirit of the artists who "vowed to never forget lessons learnt, and expressed themselves directly in the most powerful way" also coincided with the public mood and ultimately the impact of the exhibition went beyond the effect of the works themselves:

Why do you think our exhibition set off such strong reactions in people? People came to the exhibition with their own scars and wounds; our immature paintings and sculptures were hardly powerful enough to inspire such deep feelings in them. It is our love of life that has given us the courage to break out of the prolonged silence imposed upon us and cry out, in the language of art, from our wounded souls.³¹³

The Stars were by no means the only group to challenge convention. The Beijing Oil Painting Research Association (BOPRA) was another popular group of artists which was established in the Spring of 1979 and held an exhibition in October. Their members included the artists Zhuang Yan, Wu Guanzhong, Zhan Jianjun, Yuan Yunsheng, Cao Dali (b.1934) and Jin Shangyi (b.1934). Their reason for forming such groups was to enable them to hold frequent events such as exhibitions under their own initiative, and therefore to a certain extent setting their own agenda.

By the time they held their 3rd exhibition, however, some of the members had begun to take on increasingly political issues (fig 7.08 & 7.09). Feng Guodong (b.1948) was a factory worker and amateur painter who participated in all three exhibitions getting progressively bolder in style until in the third picture he depicted a surreal scenery with

³¹³ Li Xianting "The Stars Talk About Their Work" *Meishu* 3/1980 in *The Stars Ten Years* 83

abstract amorphous shapes entitled People At Ease, A Floorsweeper's Dream (fig 7.07) Feng linked his choice of style to his personal predicament, explaining that whereas other painters had a chance to go to art school to learn how to paint "properly" he could only paint as he thought best. In the first exhibition he had expressed himself "brimming with the hopes of spring". His work in the second one testified to a fate which was lonely and beyond rescue. People at Ease was just a magnificent dream. Feng wrote a strong open letter of complaint about the injustice of the art system whose structure had left him firmly on the sidelines:

For professional artists, all the materials they need in order to paint are provided by the state and once a year they can also get subsidised by the state to travel to any part of China of their choice for some travel experience. For artists who are not professional, then it's not the same. In face of the actual present situation where one still cannot freely choose a vocation according to one's best abilities, they depend on selling paintings to go on producing, for although it is permitted to sell paintings, who is there to buy them? The poor won't buy them anyhow, and the rich don't need to spend money to buy paintings, as no matter whether they like them or not, there will always be someone willing to take the initiative of offering them as a gift."³¹⁴

While Feng attacked the hypocrisy of the official art world the picture of Sartre (fig 7.08) by Zhong Ming (b.1949) was equally provocative at a time when there was a raging debate over "the cult of Sartre". Zhong explained the reason for painting Sartre was above all because of the "importance of personal individual choice". This, he argued is always present in an artist's work. The problem lay in the "tendency" for artists to be controlled by an external "power". In his view, the attitudes of selection committees and in the predetermination of creative themes were the most frightening remaining symptom of the last ten years of calamity. The demands they made were not really confined to subject matter, content and techniques of expression, but ultimately sought to control the artist's own thoughts. Any mention of "self-expression" would mean persecution. Yet, even in with such extreme restrictions, the most important thing, the artist's "self" still survived.

³¹⁴ Feng Guodong "People At Ease, A Floorsweeper's Dream" *Meishu* 2/1981:9-10

But if I were to ask you why you want to use the medium of "painting" to express your "feelings"? Why use such a composition to express the prosperity of the future? Why did you "choose" this colour relationship to show "the Cultural Revolution is indeed good"? etc, it would appear you have still used your brain to think over, to choose and that what you have produced is an act of self expression which has gone beyond acting as a simple tool. It is easy to see that thought has controlled your creative behaviour and that you have had the final say. It appears that despite our knowing it or not, despite our acknowledging it or not, it still remains an act of self-expression.³¹⁵

Zhong Ming gave an example of such a small act of self-expression during the Cultural Revolution. An artist in painting a revolutionary picture, showing a postal worker, had become engrossed in depicting a glass prawn on a keyring which he painted in great detail. The public also chose to focus on this detail rather than the message of the picture. The artists and the public, each acting to his own needs had taken part in this little act of self-expression, affirming their interests. Now that there was greater scope for self-expression the artist and the public were closer than ever before.

Such importance of individuality over collectivity was a feature of other ideas being debated in the intellectual world, such as "socialist alienation"³¹⁶ and "socialist humanism".³¹⁷ It was a trend that criticised Maoist ideology, but at a deeper level also threatened the Four Cardinal Principles. Self-expression and Existentialism were criticised for viewing the importance of the individual independently of society thus negating man's social nature. Critics were opposed to the idea that to achieve human dignity man had to put himself above collectives, country, and society. They claimed that people as a whole were the makers of history.³¹⁸ Naturally the assumption that the Party represented this collective will went without saying. The Party was about to launch another clampdown, this time against "spiritual pollution" - "disseminating all varieties of corrupt and decadent ideologies

³¹⁵ Zhong Ming "Questions Arising From My Painting of Sartre, A Discussion of Self-Expression in Painting" *Meishu* 2/1981:7-9

³¹⁶ "Due to the lack of perfection in regard to democracy and the legal system, the people's servants would sometimes abuse the power vested in them by the people to become, instead the masters of the people" (Zhou Yang) in Gold "Just in Time. China Battles Spiritual Pollution on the Eve of 1984" *Asian Survey* (Sept 1984):966.

³¹⁷ "The restoration of human dignity and the elevation of man's worth" *Ibid*:996

³¹⁸ Ye Lang "'Self Expression' is not our Banner" *Meishu* 11/1981:5-6

of the bourgeoisie and other exploiting classes and disseminating sentiments of distrust towards the socialist and communist cause and to the Communist Party leadership."³¹⁹

Such measures were usually effective in curbing creativity and this period saw the first wave of artists seeking refuge overseas. By the mid-eighties almost all the Stars had left China, while member of other groups such as the Nameless Painting Society again retreated from the public sphere. Yet new groups continued to respond with enthusiasm whenever there were signs of liberalisation, and in 1985 a modern art movement on an unprecedented scale swept across China's cities. This vitality gave an impression of security, a feeling that this new art had established itself. Yet, reviewing the situation in 1986, Zhu Zude (b.1949) felt this appearance was misleading because new art remained officially "rootless" while the government controlled production.

In the last thirty years a clear fact is: the government is only customer for art, and the masses mainly get to enjoy art through reproductions. Artists are encouraged to publicise current policies, and a minority of artists with remarkable achievements are provided with relatively good living and working conditions. They conserve pre existing formulae and become authorities to judge artworks.³²⁰

For young artists, despite frantic activity and apparent creative freedom the idea of self-expression and their role as artists remained problematic. The Mao legacy had given them the mission to change history while denying their individuality. The Deng era had again tried to deny the importance of the individual by curbing self-expression, institutionalising new artists, moulding them in the tradition of the older generation, preventing them from tackling social problems and accusing artists who adopted certain styles of losing identity. This was further exacerbated by the sense of vacuum created Cultural Revolution and the feeling of the need to "catch up" which meant that "the works of individual artists would have no value individually, but only as part of the whole (generation)".³²¹ For some young

³¹⁹ *Renmin Ribao* November 16, 1983:1, in Gold 1984:996

³²⁰ Zhu Zude "Rootless Art" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 2/1986

³²¹ Ba Huang "Repetition and Tragedy" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 28/1986

artists to try and gain an understanding of what they were supposed to be and do could only be done by escaping conventions and the walls of institutions.

Sheng Qi (b.1965) a student at the CAAC tired of traditional methods of teaching art, began to explore life outside the Academy:

The thing that annoyed me most was the social position of the artist as such - something unlike other members of society, something special, different, perhaps crazy, some sort of animal and at the same time possessed by some heavenly spirit.

In order to escape this set framework, under pretence of some illness, I escaped the art school, art museums, galleries and all such institutions, in search of common experience. I was drawn to other universities' common students to share all their experiences, included those connected with art. I attempted to actually live art with the people I met.³²²

The exciting thing about this escape was that the relocation of artist and artworks outside the usual context led to a new relation between art and audience in a space where it might not be recognised as art. Performance art became the ideal form of expression for Sheng Qi and others (figs 7.09 & 7.10).³²³ In December 1986, Sheng Qi and friends held a performance in Beijing University where they wrapped themselves in different coloured cloths and wandered round the campus causing a commotion. Sheng Qi, bandaged from head to foot and "trembling" looked as if he had escaped from hospital. Xi Jianjun later stripped off and cycled round naked.³²⁴ The result of such decontextualisation of art was:

Reactions vary from pleasant surprise, walking away, bemusement, bewilderment to the actual lack of recognition. It can even cause sudden confusion in terms of a sense of reality and locality.

Question: Why aren't you dressed? What is it you are wearing? Answer: The sky is my dress. ... The questioning person thinks to himself then - well why am I wearing any clothes? He looks like he is from a mental hospital. Am I normal? Am I like everybody else? Maybe I can use some colour to try to change my walking speed and mode - crawl and walk,

³²² Sheng Qi "The Concept of the 21st Century - The Path of My Art Since 1986" Feb 1998

³²³ In December 1986 a literary art festival was held at Beida, Wu Guangyao took a hundred metres of white cloth on which he painted and encouraged other students to do the same. Zhao Nong "Art Heads for Society" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987

³²⁴ Kai Shui "52 Hour long Action Art Happening" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987

neither human nor animal, something unknown. This is Beijing University. What is happening here? Why is this happening here? This isn't art, is it? Or maybe this is not communist art?...³²⁵

The performance had the role of reviewing individuality provoking both artist and audience to ask the questions. "Can you be yourself? What do you call being yourself? Do you have the choice to be yourself? If you fit into society, are you closer to reality, closer to truth? But then, what dictates reality and what is truth?"³²⁶

Once again art had broken away from pure aesthetics towards the Maoist tradition of social activism, but this time the artist was not part of an orchestrated mass movement, he was an individual trying to find his identity. The performance ended with the group alone in the Yuanmingyuan acting out primitive behaviour. Was this "throwing all caution to the wind"³²⁷ or "monkey business,"³²⁸ art or anti-art?

Such questions were not altogether new. Borrowing the opinion of some conservative elements in the art world, Li Xianting affirmed "The art current of 1985 is not an art current." The reasons he gave as to why this was so, however were unexpected. Li argued that since 1949 art had not existed for itself, therefore all the movements that had taken place in the eighties were a move against the previous phase of art. Even self expression, he argued did not really exist in China because "what artists wanted to express were not individual thoughts but those of a whole generation." "The 1985 art movement was the deepening of the movement for emancipation of thought and not a newly arising modern art movement." The article reaffirmed social history as the criteria for the development of art. However, unlike the critics who saw the world war and social crisis as the background for the rise of modern art in the West, Li emphasised humanism and science (semiotics and psychology) as the essential socio-cultural background for individual subject consciousness and the exploration of language in modern art. His assertion that the modern art could not

³²⁵ Sheng Qi "The Concept of the 21st Century - The Path of My Art Since 1986" Feb 1998

³²⁶ Sheng Qi "The Concept of the 21st Century - The Path of My Art Since 1986" Feb 1998

³²⁷ One of the participants explained the idea of Concept 21 as referring to a proverb that meant "throwing all caution to the wind." Kai Shui "52 Hour long Action Art Happening" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987

³²⁸ Wang Weihu "Different Opinions of Concept 21 Action Art Happening" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987

exist in China was therefore not aimed at the avant-garde but was a blanket criticism of China's social conditions.³²⁹

7.2 Finding One's Feet

The reality that the government continued to control freedom of expression was reinforced with a further clampdown in early 1987 after students held demonstrations in several cities. Nevertheless, relative to the Mao era and the Cultural Revolution in particular the 1980s offered unprecedented freedom and extraordinarily good conditions for creating. The *huayuan* system had been expanded,³³⁰ the academy system employed a high proportion of artists, and even those who did not get these ideal jobs and were assigned to smaller work units in towns still had conditions to form groups and hold exhibitions. Effectively, the government had done exactly what Zhu Zude claimed, rewarding loyal artists, giving them authority over the art world and expecting them to support the Party in return.

For many of the older generation this was a long awaited reward, and their pictures usually reflected optimism as well as a considerable variety of stylistic directions. Liu Xun (b.1923) who headed the Beijing branch of the CAA, painted semi-abstract pictures with a calligraphic feel (fig 7.11). Wei Qimei (b.1923) who taught in the first oil painting studio at the CAFA was known for his terse images of modernisation (fig 7.12). His pictures usually had a very "clean" and positive outlook, devoid of the heroism and reliance of plot of Soviet Realism, they had a more American feel to them. Other teachers trained in the fifties, such as Zhan Jianjun, Wen Lipeng (b.1931), and Zhu Naizheng (b.1935) showed greater influence of soviet styles but nevertheless tried out more lyrical expressions. At the more extreme end of experimentation, Wu Guanzhong of the CAAC and Ge Pengren (b.1941) of the CAFA

³²⁹ Li Jiataun "The Important Thing Is Not Art" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 2/1986

³³⁰ In Beijing there was the Beijing Huayuan and the Beijing Guohuayuan. It was in the provinces, however that the system really expanded. There follows a list of the founding of new huayuan in the areas covered in the thesis: Zhejiang Huayuan 1984, Hangzhou Huayuan 1985, Xiling Huayuan 1979; Nanjing Shuhuayuan 1979, Wuxi Huayuan 1980, Xuzhou Huayuan 1980, Changzhou and Nantong in 1978 ; The Sichuan Huayuan 1980, Chengdu Huayuan 1980, the Chongqing Guohuayuan 1981, Neijiang 1989, Luzhou 1986, Jinjiang 1981; Guizhou Guohuayuan 1980, Guiyang Shuhuayuan (?); Yunnan Huayuan 1984

experimented with abstraction, and Cao Dali (b.1934), an artist who had grown up in Indonesia and worked at the Beijing Huayuan, dabbled with Surrealism. Even artists who were entrusted the most important positions in the art world, such as Jin Shangyi (b.1934) who became dean of the CAFA in 1987, tackled political subjects in quite a tame fashion more interested in form than message (fig 7.13).³³¹ Most of the above participated in the Nude Painting Exhibition (22/12/1988- 08/01/1989).³³²

The political tameness of official art in the eighties in part reflected the Deng regime's rejection of class struggle and the use of art as a weapon. Ever since the Yan'an talks, the Party had required artists to expose the dark side of their enemy's society, while laying emphasis on the bright side of their own. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao had turned the cultural machine's weapon inwards, to criticise evils within Chinese society and the Party, causing havoc.³³³ In the Deng era, concessions to the "ontology of art" ()³³⁴ coincided with the desire to reduce political activism in art. While it became rewarding for artists to portray the "bright side", it was also possible to expose the dark side (within limits set by the Four Cardinal Principles), but this had to be done at the artists own expense and outside the national exhibitions.

Between 1985 and 1986 small, more independent and adventurous exhibitions began to crop up in all major cities. In Beijing however the abundance of opportunities to exhibit has been given as an explanation as to why there were not some many small-scale group exhibitions until the November Exhibition (11/1985) was held at the Forbidden City.³³⁵ To remedy this lack of modern art a group of youths decided to set up the Beijing Youth Painting Society, and were overwhelmed by over 700 applications. 180 artists were accepted

³³¹ Bearing in mind his best known early work was the portrait of Mao at the December Conference and that he had also been involved in painting a new copy of Dong Xiwen's Foundation of State his works in the eighties don't seem at all political. Li Jiangtao "Jin Shangyi's Path of Artistic Creation" *Meishu* 9/1988:8-13

³³² Ge Pengren "When Nude Figures Entered the Temple of Chinese Art" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 1/1989

³³³ The methods of exposing the "dark side of society" also changed considerably. In the thirties, it usually took the form of depicting poverty, oppression and exploitation carried out by the Guomindang and the Japanese. In the Mao era, rather than uncovering dark details of certain situations, evils were simply personified, and the personifications were uglified, turning depictions into straightforward conflicts between good and evil. See for instance "Liuhsia Chih Denounces Confucius" *China Pictorial* 10/1974:33-34 where a healthy, strong, young worker reviles the crafty, wimpish, old Confucius.

³³⁴ i.e. That art should be independent from politics and be judged according to its own unique character - form.

³³⁵ Gao Minglu: 261

as members and an exhibition was held in the National Art Museum (16-25/05/1986). Although it showed a great diversity of styles its impact was not great.³³⁶ The Towards the Future Exhibition held in 1987 again showed a tendency to accommodate to a diversity of trends and styles. Organised by the *Towards the Future* magazine it exhibited works of artists who contributed illustrations and paintings to the publication.³³⁷

The latter exhibition included works of young CAFA teachers who were very active in the art world at the time. Their works, all quite different from each other, were more perturbing than those of the older generation. Xia Xiaowan's (b.1959) pictures (fig 7.15), though not a criticism of reality were tragic-comic scenes about human souls, co-existence and troubled ideals. She Benming (b.1958) tried to capture more intensely truths about life (fig 7.16).³³⁸ Ma Lu (b.1958) painted pictures of the "second nature" (man-made environment) in thick brushstrokes influenced by German Neo-realism (fig 7.17).

The vitality of the Beijing art world in the late eighties was also fuelled by a community of independent and unorthodox artists who rented accommodation in farmer's houses in the Haidian district of Beijing.³³⁹ Known as "vagabond" artists (literally aimless wanderers)³⁴⁰ they were mostly university graduates who had abandoned their work units and became "homeless, jobless and penniless". These artists, photographers and playwrights scraped a living by exploring the new openings in the commercialisation of culture, many of them relying on Beijing's foreign community as a market. Although their situation was tough, they were not purely commercial artists, and were usually freer to try more outrageous experiments which would be impossible for those tied to work units. Wang Deren (d.o.b.unknown), for instance, made a performance in Beijing Square in which he reenacted a scene of class struggle from his youth when he had been criticised as a "small landlord". Months later he went to climb mountains in Tibet to "experience and expand the existence of

³³⁶ Gao Minglu: 269-272

³³⁷ Chen Weihe "About the Towards the Future Exhibition" *Meishu* 3/1988:30-31 also *Zhongguo Meishubao* 8/1988.

³³⁸ She Benming "To Grasp True Vitality" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 2/1989.

³³⁹ Wei He "An Impression of the Beijing Mangliu Artists" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 44/1988:2

³⁴⁰ There was also a pun which by changing the last character from 到 to 后 turned it into those who stay behind for no reason.

life". By summertime he was thinking of giving up art because it was too heavy a burden. The reporter thought the number of such artists would increase, but wondered if their efforts could be sustained. In 1988 Wen Pulin (d.o.b.unknown) tried to capture this end of century feel in a film which incorporated music and performance by the Concept 21 group and others, held at the Great Wall.³⁴¹

A curious indicator of the degree of institutionalisation of art in the eighties was the fate of folk art. By the time of the National Peasant Painting Exhibition in 1983³⁴² the traditional centres of Maoist peasant paintings had become quite settled and commercial. Towards the late eighties many peasant paintings began to have freer expression and at the same time, many professional artists began to incorporate elements of folk art in their painting. One ZAFPA graduate even promoted a very successful movement of "modern" and "abstract" peasant oil paintings.³⁴³

The decline or transformation of the new tradition of peasant painting was paralleled by a greater respect for the older folk art traditions manifested by the setting up of folk art department in the CAFA in 1987. This was in fact based on the old New Year Painting and Strip Cartoon Department Jiang Feng had set up in 1980. It now expanded the New Year Painting Section to Folk Art but this was actually a shift of emphasis from the Maoist tradition of educating the peasants to a new one of learning from them, since folk art had its own rich pictorial conventions and philosophy which was "closely linked to China's ancient *yin/yang* theories".³⁴⁴ The intention of the department, however, was not to make a folk art workshop but to create artists of the new era. "It must both look to the world and stand in the whole of national culture and human culture to establish overall strategic ideas".³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Mi Mi "The T.V. Film the Great Earthquake is Entering the Final Phase of Production" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 52/1988

³⁴² "National Peasant Painting Exhibition in 1983 list of Prize Winning Works" and reproductions *Meishu* 12/1983:18-19

³⁴³ Li Foyi and Li Feixue "Imagination and Practice in Shengsi Fishermen's Paintings" *Meishu* 2/1988:45

³⁴⁴ Yang Xianrang "The Establishment of the Folk Art Department and Explorations in Education" *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1987:3-5

³⁴⁵ Jin Zhilin "An Overall Understanding and Folk Art Teaching" *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1987:6-9

To a certain extent artists were being asked to make use of an unfamiliar heritage within a radically different context. Among the research students Zhang Furong (b.1956) from the oil painting department acknowledged that cultural phenomena have both a "historical character" and were a "common time entity", and that in today's world, people were looking to folk art to find out how their "cultural genes" differed from the West.³⁴⁶ However, he denied the solution that by using folk art one could have more national character. Coming to the conclusion that one could only appropriate elements (just as one would select elements from other media and traditions) which suit one's interest. His own work closer to Douanier Rousseau than to folk art (fig 7.18).³⁴⁷

Lü Shengzhong (b.1952) from the folk art department had a closer attachment to this art form, having grown up in Pingdu in Shandong where his mother was involved in creating folk art. Having been taught traditional painting at university, Lü rebelled against this uniform tradition to explore the richness and variety of folk art. Despite his early familiarity with folk art Lü also found he could not easily go back to it. He could not reconcile the genuine quality of folk art with the need to be modern. After unsuccessfully attempting to update folk art with new content, Lü found the most beneficial strategy was to go and live among the folk artists and learn their approach to art and life.³⁴⁸ He also felt the simplicity and immediacy of folk art had a globally accessible character not available in *guohua*.

These possibilities of traditional art were also explored by Xu Bing (b.1955) in his work the Book of Heaven first shown in his joint exhibition with Lü Shengzhong in 1988.³⁴⁹ Xu Bing's work was a printed book, set out in the traditional form but in which the characters were invented. The title was linked to the idea of Zen, but the main appeal was the aesthetic appeal of the characters, and the way it was exhibited.³⁵⁰ Both these artists were part of a

³⁴⁶ Zhang Furong "The Plastic Elements in Folk Art and Our Choices" *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1987:35-39.

³⁴⁷ Zhang Furong "Our Choices" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 11/1988

³⁴⁸ Lü Shengzhong "Learning Steps, Three Topics" *Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1987:31-34.

³⁴⁹ Lü Peng and Yi Dan 1992:312-321

³⁵⁰ The original title was A Book From the Sky, The Mirror of the World - An Analytical Reflection of the End of Century. It was shortened to *Tianshu* and has been translated in many different ways: A Book from the Sky, A Book From Heaven or Heavenly Book. (Xu Bing, interviewed by Christina Davidson "Words From Heaven" *Art and Asia Pacific* Vol2 no1.1994). The title has interesting associations to old philosophical texts such as *Zhuangzi*, chapter 14, and *Tian Wen* "'Heavenly Questions", a chapter from *Songs of the South*, an ancient text

trend in the late eighties which championed the ontological properties of art. This included the trend for abstraction and "purification of language" of the neo-academics and the neo-classical painters. The latter had had a strong presence in the art world through artists like Wang Yidong (b.1955) and Sun Weimin (b.1946), but all these trends were not usually very dynamic (fig 7.14). In the late eighties, however, they began to gain more prominence, and their younger adherents began to be more outspoken.³⁵¹ In late '87 an argument erupted between classicist artists and modernist artists who accused each other of being "pseuds". Eventually in February a conference was held by the editorial office of *Meishu* to debate the subject, in which five prominent art critics and five members of *Meishu* took part.³⁵²

Shao Dajian introduced the ways in which these terms were being used. The first usage was derogatory and meant that it was simply false or fake, presumably meaning that it was simply a copy without any real substance. The second meant that it was not the real thing since it was adapted to China and contained Chinese characteristics and therefore could not have the same meaning as classical and modern in their original contexts.

He observed that the different factions chose their standpoint according to their understanding of China's current needs and phase of development. Followers of the modernist current thought the classical style was a product of Western small-scale agricultural society and was unsuited to China's current process of modernisation - an out of date "academic" school. The classicists thought the modernists were plagiarists who had broken away from China's current reality and what China needed humanism, rationalism and scientific analysis - therefore the classical styles from David to Picasso. Shao himself thought that both are products of economy, culture and aesthetic concepts of Western society. To take root in China they must be suited to China's contemporary reality. Modernism must be

of the Chu kingdom. See Hawkes, David (translated and introduced by) *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* Penguin 1985. The title "Summons of the Souls" (Lü Shengzhong) is also associated with this work. Chu culture was famous for its richness and eccentricity. The model for the reoccurring papercut figure in Lu Shengzhong's work can be found in the famous Fei Yi banner discovered in a tomb in Mawangdui. The banner itself was supposedly used in a ceremony summoning the soul to ascend to heaven (although this has been contested by Wu Hong).

³⁵¹ Lü Peng and Yi Dan 1992:310-312

³⁵² The Debate Over "'Pseudo' Classical Style and 'Pseudo' Modernism. Edited Conference Speeches" *Meishu* 4/1988:4-6

adapted to win over the Chinese audience, while classicism must also contain a modern consciousness and not be an infatuation with technique.

Gu Zhenyu (d.o.b.unknown) argued that the classical style artists had much the same intentions as the modernist movement and that their experiments were inter linked. Unlike the realists, they sought a profound understanding of Western culture by mastering its whole background. Their intention was to change national tradition's perception of objects and intuitive way of grasping things in their generality. The development of Western art from Da Vinci to modernity had been driven by the spirit of exploring the objective world and exploring the subjective spiritual world and these explorations had guided and accompanied the whole development of the Western cultural system and mentality. From this perspective, naturalistic styles and modern art since the renaissance (cubists, constructivists, abstractionists) hid a common "cultural gene". The abstract and subjective expressive forms of modernism are the historical fruits of positivist explorations and humanisation.

Shui Tianzhong (b.1935) objected to the use of Western art history to judge contemporary Chinese art. This could only lead to accusations of falsity. As far as the classical trend went it was a return to the past which occurred during the reemergence of neorealism in the West. It meant to innovate by returning to the past and was a rebellion against the realism of the last thirty years. He felt the modern trend, however was in danger of breaking away from China's cultural soil and believed that modernism was western and does not belong to all mankind:

Some artists advocate changing Chinese people's national character and national mentality. No matter how great or noble their motives and intentions of these ideas are, I think the possibilities of this coming about are very slim. A nation's character and its deep mentality are unchangeable, it is different from customs and way of life... The reason Chinese modern painting does not come up to expectations is not due to its not having the same characteristics of European and North American painting, but precisely because it still lacks the true thoughts and feelings, spiritual moral character and even unique form and language which is different from Western modernism.

Lang Shaojun thought that neither trend was "pseudo". Both were produced in China and were different from their Western counterparts.³⁵³ Lang differentiated traditions as a system of symbols of visual art language and as thought currents and art phenomena. In the former case they had no natural boundaries and no temporal limitations, but in the latter case, (when they were put to use by different people) they both had national boundaries and the character of their age. In other words, the prototype was not limited by temporal or national boundaries, but if someone else makes use of it, even if it is an imitation it will somehow be transformed: "in the process of being received, they will inevitably be baptised by national mentality and filtered through the environment of their age".

The problems posed in this debate were similar to the question of the applicability and relevance of Postmodernism to China. Postmodern theory had been introduced in architecture as early as 1980 and began to be debated in terms of art in 1985.³⁵⁴ The theory appealed to many because it was understood as being one stage more advanced than modernism, while at the same time giving more scope for national identity. The arguments against the use of postmodernism in a country which critics had described as being in a "pre-modern phase"³⁵⁵ of development and where the modern art movement was not officially accepted, were more convincing. Li Xianting's criticism of "post-modern architecture" in China was typical:

...such imitations of the ancients had no modern feel whatsoever, because they had different functional and spiritual needs from the ancients, they also lost the aesthetic content of ancient architecture. In structure, because they used cement they not only ceased to be traditional, but reflected our most backward current technical level. As a result, since all that

353A similar debate on Realism/Modernism took part in the field of literature. Here there was a tendency to simplify the conflict as being between Chinese Realism and foreign Modernism, an accusation the modernists eventually diverted by focussing on language and indicating the foreign roots of Realism. The difference in the art world was that "realism" no longer seemed to be a real rival as opponents of modernism had adopted "classicism". In many ways this shows how the official establishment had become apolitical. Realism in the official realms also came to refer mainly to technique rather than political critique. In the 1990s this was to allow art critics such as Li Xianting to adopt the banner of realism as social critique by "cynical realism".

³⁵⁴ Gao Minglu 1991:455-466. See also Laing, Ellen Johnston "Is there Post-Modern Art in the People's Republic of China" in Clark:207-221.

³⁵⁵ Zhang Qiang "Pre-modern Art Period and Other Things" *Meishu Sichao* 3/1987

was left was an apparent outer shape of ancient architecture, they were nick-named "pseudo-antiques" as they contained no new spirit and no new technique.³⁵⁶

The charges made against its relevance to the artworld were identical. Post-modernism ultimately appealed to people because they could use "national culture" to substitute "vanguardism" in their competition with the West, but such a strategy only showed a conservative mentality, and its final product was a sham.

Zou Denong (d.o.b.unknown), lecturer in architecture at Tianjin University, pointed out that the advocacy of Post-modernism seemed to be a repeat of the movement in the fifties to keep out modern architecture. He urged people when importing new theories not to forget to examine their motives nor forget historical lessons: "Faced with Post-modernism we are right to fear that the modernist movement in architecture which was once kept out can today be squeezed aside as backward."³⁵⁷ Zhu Zude also raised the need for the clarification of concepts, that newness did not mean simply jumping onto the latest bandwagon.³⁵⁸

The abundance of choices open to artists, the coexistence of so many different currents, and the rivalry between them was unprecedented. Returning from Germany, the artist Ma Lu likened the situation to a "cultural war" where "large communities such as nations or countries are nervously fighting against each other and inside, each large community is also crammed with all kinds of small communities- styles and schools, within which all kinds of individuals move in disorderly straight, repeating and spiral motion".³⁵⁹ The understanding of individuality and the parameters of self-expression had shifted.

The fundamental motive for pursuing individuality is not in individuality itself, but in finding one's position and values in a cross-sectional comparison of the history of art and one's contemporaries, every artist must establish his position within this kind of grid relation, only finding his self in history and in the world has any meaning, just depending on the show

³⁵⁶ Li Jiataun "Post -Modernism, Nationalisation and Rice Straw" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987.

³⁵⁷ Zou Denong "Post-Modernism, A Familiar Theory" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 3/1987

³⁵⁸ Zhu Zude "Renovation of Concepts or Chaos" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 8/1987

³⁵⁹ Ma Lu "Art in the Cultural War and the Size of the Self" *Meishu* 2/1986:28-30

of individuality does not reach this objective. The most direct product of competition is diversification and diversification implies adaptability.

This shift in perception shows a shift in priorities. Artists were not so concerned with originality or overtaking the West, but the crux of their work was to find a meaningful starting point among all the available options to allow them to develop. The rate at which styles were dropped and adopted in the early eighties showed a strong dependence on the influx of new schools of Western art. By the late eighties, however some artists at least had found a relatively stable and meaningful path. The interest art critics showed in the new wave art movement and the historical approval of the progress made, lent a cohesiveness and strength to a movement which had previously been seen as chaotic imitation. At the same time it was recognised that it was artists who had submerged themselves in the difficulties of the age who had given expression to the soul of the age. The use of Western modern art styles was shown to have played a meaningful, strategic role in Chinese art and culture.

Although such works showed few new original formal qualities, they had indisputable value within Chinese art. The question remained as to whether they had any value if compared with Western art and history. With his usual perspicacity, Li Xianting, put this question against a broader cultural background, and turned it back on itself.³⁶⁰ Why should Western criteria for art history be relevant to China? Western art historians and artists worked in a particular cultural and social environment. They had extracted the history of the formal development of modern art from the fabric of social history. Such a narrative had led Herbert Read to exclude the Mexican muralists from his history. His account could not be understood as the inevitable path of development for all modern art. With its emphasis on formal development western art had lost its communion with the soul of mankind, and had led great thinkers to worry about the predicament of modern civilisation. Great art had to include pursuing the question of humanity's ultimate values. "In times of crisis", he asked "how can Braque and Picasso be the paradigm of art?" Chinese artists should not be seeking

³⁶⁰ Hu Cun "The Era Awaits the Vital Passion of the Great Soul" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 37/1988

solutions from the West but should realise the problems they face are common and simultaneous with those of all mankind.

7.3 The Cultural Elite

The cultural élite is not natural, and is not due to people's self-closure or promotion. The production of elite artworks is not the patent or privilege of any group and its consumers are also a not a very fixed known number. Elite culture and its strata of consumers are a relative category with some stability, but is at the same time fluid, seeking differentiation and sublimation, leaving the door to the future open.

The cultural élite can be a politician or an authority..., but the social élite including politicians are not necessarily the cultural élite...

The elite art of an era or of a country by means of aesthetic creation expresses the degree the civilisation and wisdom the human spirit can achieve. (Lang Shaojun)³⁶¹

[The schizophrenia of the Chinese intellectual] is expressed as: on the one hand he suffers profoundly for [the sake of] of society and life, on the other hand he does the utmost to temper and tranquillise the inner self to reach the realm of escape and detachment. This detachment comes at the price of sacrificing many human possibilities and desires (Li Xianting)³⁶²

For art college students in the eighties there was a good chance that upon graduation they would have a work published in *Meishu*, the most widely disseminated art magazine in China. The role played by the art academies throughout the decade was very important, because it was there that the artists had greater access to libraries and new information unavailable outside and it was also the place where they began to discuss ideas and meet other like minded students. The academies lent a cohesiveness to the art world, and were the starting point of a large network of personal connections that were to continue developing

³⁶¹ Lang Shaojun "Rebuild China's Elite Art " *Meishu Yanjiu* 2/1989:29-38

³⁶² Hu Cun "The Era Awaits the Vital Passion of the Great Soul" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 37/1988

long after artists graduated. By virtue of having been to an art academy one necessarily became part of the art world elite.

The China this elite belonged to was a state which was not geared to accepting them as such. Whereas in science it might be accepted that specialised knowledge might be beyond the grasp of the ordinary citizen, the scientist's work though not understood was still seen to be serving the masses, to be produced for the material wealth of the masses. This situation did not apply to cultural production. For culture, if it was to be produced for the masses had to be understood by everyone. So there occurred a split in the cultural elite, between those who basically agreed with this principle, and those who questioned it.

The problem was that if culture was reduced to the lowest common denominator how could one interpret creation. "Marx had to first create Marxism for it to be studied and understood." Understanding new things was not an automatic reaction, but required time, effort and sensibility. The idea of exhibitions for internal viewing only was a capitulation to this idea. Daring exhibitions could be seen by "experts" and discussed at conferences, but were generally kept away from the public eye. This strategy in itself, however, was already a recognition that there were different levels of understanding, that the public did not consist of one identical mass. The intellectual elite were then the natural audience for new works. In the sense that they were ahead of the public, they formed an "avant-garde" of like-minded people.

Throughout the eighties, contacts between these groups increased. Artists exchanged correspondence, photographs and ideas with each other. Difficulty in finding exhibition spaces gave rise to new strategies, and artists held slide exhibitions of their work. Yet, ultimately their work meant little if it was just kept isolated within a small elite. They still wanted to exhibit and get public response and recognition. They still felt their art was more relevant than the works that raised no new questions. They also realised that they were not so "few". In fact the new wave of '85 showed they were the most active force in the art world, and during the 1985 Zhuhai slide conference, when representatives from different art groups

throughout the country met to exchange experiences, the idea of holding a national modern art exhibition was born.³⁶³

Almost four years later, in February 1989, the exhibition was held in the National Art Museum. By this time, the situation in the artworld had already changed quite a lot. The provocativeness of the 85-86 art current had died down, and many of their ideas had been embodied in the work of academic artists. So the modern art exhibition was to be presented as a retrospective, in which all the main trends from all over China in the art movement of 85 and since would be represented as follows: 1. installations, performance and pop art (figs 7.21); 2. religious sublime atmosphere (fig 7.22); 3. absurdity and rationality the cold trend (fig 7.23); 4. venting of emotions, suffering etc - hot trend (fig 7.24); 5. reaction against the current of 85 including works of the purification of concepts and ink-wash painting (fig 7.20 & 7.25).³⁶⁴

The fact that the exhibition was to become a retrospective, that they had to accept restrictions "no erotic art and no performance" and that to enter the national art museum the avant-garde was in danger of conforming worried the curator Li Xianting. It would drain the exhibition of contemporary relevance and effectively make a statement the whole movement was now a thing of the past. In the preparatory conference held in Huangshan in 1988, there was a call for new works and new strategies were mapped out to enliven the exhibition. The spirit of the exhibition was embodied in the "no U turns" logo designed by Yang Zhilin.

In the event some of the more interesting works were a comment on the exhibition process, and the rules imposed upon it. In Big Business Wu Shanzhuan set up a stall for selling prawns which he managed to smuggle into the museum with Li Xianting's help. His advertisement read:

"Dear customers: At the time when the celebrations welcoming the year of the "snake" are being held all over the country, in order to enrichen the spiritual and material life of the

³⁶³ Zhou Yan "Background Information on the China Modern Art Exhibition" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 6/1989:4.

³⁶⁴ (Li Xianting) "Written on the Opening of the China Modern Art Exhibition" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 6/1989:1.

people of the capital, I have brought from my home town in Zhoushan special grade export prawns (transferred for domestic market)... Buy now while stocks last."

After the opening Wu was visited by the police who tried to confiscate his prawns. He fished out an introductory letter from his work unit to prove that the prawns were art works to be used for purposes of exhibition. The police still fined him 20 *yuan* and ordered to stop sales whereupon he added a note on his blackboard: "Stocktaking today, business temporarily suspended." An article in *Zhongguo Meishubao* explained his ideas

Anybody can become famous through a little business, anybody can become a millionaire.

Selling prawns in the art museum is a revolt against the court which tries works of art - the Art Museum. Because this kind of power of the art museum, will lead to the artwork, this innocent lamb to be tried with legal-like procedures; leading the artist as a bystander to appear in court as a witness; leading to a waste of space.

Selling prawns in the art museum is also a revolt against art theorists, because their power to evaluate artworks, will turn artworks which are nothing in themselves into a all-englobing tragedies; turning the artist into a producer of "merchandise" whose sales are everywhere promoted; leading to a waste of money.³⁶⁵

The ban on erotic art was broken by the Inflationist group. Their work Midnight Mass - The Last End of Century Trial (fig 7.26) consisted in large twisted textile balloons which resembled naked bodies or genitals. Their target was the overinflated importance given to culture:

What we call inflationism is actually a kind of anti inflationism. In our opinion, the traditional culture or civilisation people never tire of talking about is a forced, propped up, artificial thing with no vitality. In order to oppose this inflationism one needs to emphasise and inflate the core questions of life (sex), to stimulate people's nerves, including those of the artists themselves, to return to the most fundamental problems of people's existence...In the age of inflation, in over impatiently promoting and selling themselves, everyone peddling is the emperor's new clothes. Every kind and colour of inflationary gimmicks have already stuffed up the belly of civilisation. (Inflationist Manifesto)

³⁶⁵ Wu Shanzhuan "About Big Business" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 11/1989

The most notorious incident of the exhibition was when shortly after the opening, Xiao Lu (b.1962) and Tang Song from the ZAFA fired a pistol at their installation work Dialogue. Tang Song was arrested shortly afterwards and the exhibition was closed. Xiao Lu later gave herself up to the police. Both were sentenced to five days detention during which time they published an explanation:

As the parties concerned in the "shooting incident", we consider that it was an event of pure art. We think that art itself is something which contains an artist's different kind of understanding of society, but as artists we are not interested in politics, what we are interested in is the value of art itself and of using a certain kind of suitable means to carry out a process of creation and understanding."³⁶⁶

Quite what this process of understanding was left unsaid. Li Xianting however provided the clues: "To what degree you are able to grasp the boundaries of committing a crime requires elaborate planning. According to what the maker divulged, the occurrence, process and result of the incident went more or less as estimated." Four years earlier critics had had to argue to free theory from the idea that painted images could be understood as criminal because they could be held responsible for its social effects.³⁶⁷ Now artists were committing what was in fact a criminal act as a form of risky social criticism. Their privileged background (Xiao Lu's father was head of the ZAFA, Tang Song's father the commanding officer of a military region), had enabled them to procure a gun (illegally), to shoot it in public, and get released three days early.

The works in the exhibition varied in content, humour and message, but one thing they shared was that the artists took themselves and what they were doing very seriously - even when they were not taking themselves seriously.

In the New Literati Exhibition (11-17/04/1989) held soon afterwards a totally different mood prevailed. These artists were more culturally orientated and playful. Their

³⁶⁶ *Beijing Youth Report* 17 February.

³⁶⁷ "The ethical character of art and the ethical character of behaviour are two fundamentally different things. People's actions must be accountable to law, but law has no way of passing a just verdict on art. "Yang Xiaoyan "The Choices We Face" *Meishu* 1/1986

whole outlook took on a more traditional stance between art and society, where art returned to the realm of the inner self and the likeminded.³⁶⁸ They tended to keep art and politics separate - the individual had an influence on politics and society through work, position and life attitude, (even if in a small way) but did not seek to turn art into a weapon, nor seemed concerned with ideas of development or competing with modern art.

Li Xianting, who had previously defended abstraction in Chinese ink-wash painting, wrote an article in favour of the New Literati. "History", he said, "is not unilinear. Behind the slogan, 'down with the Four Wangs', another revolution in ink-wash painting has been quietly rumbling away."³⁶⁹ Li rehabilitated the Four Wangs and the idea of the abstract beauty of brushstrokes. He saw the New Literati as inheritors of Huang Binhong and Qi Baishi in developing ink-wash painting towards abstraction. At the same time he criticised experiments which blended ink wash with modern art, claiming that most of these efforts made after 1979 "were no more than a most superficial influence of Western modern art".

Li divided New Literati Painting into two schools. The Northern school was centred on Beijing (figs 7.28-7.30), and was represented by Chen Ping (b.1960), Long Rui (b.1946) and Jia Youfu. The characteristic of this school was the heavy use of similar texture strokes to create contrasting areas of pattern.³⁷⁰ The Southern school (fig 7.31), centred on Nanjing, and was represented by such artists as Dong Xinbing (b.1940), Zhu Xinjian (b.1953) and Wang Mengqi (b.1947). They were known for their use of line.³⁷¹

During the New Literati Painting Exhibition a conference was held by the China Art Research Institute in Beijing which brought together about fifty artists and critics, from Beijing and the outside. The participants saw New Literati Painting as a reaction against the New Wave Art movement, as well as against the modern (i.e. realist) ink wash movement

³⁶⁸ Nevertheless this group drew support from members of various cities, Nanjing, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou and elsewhere.

³⁶⁹ Li Xianting "Southern Lines and Northern Texture Strokes. The Overall Formation of Two Styles of New Literati Painting" *Zhongguo Meishubao* 7/1989

³⁷⁰ I have deliberately chosen a picture by Jia Youfu which does not fit in with this pattern. Jia was also known for using very wet ink, and ink pouring to create atmospheric effects. Tian Liming was another artist who also relied on wet ink as opposed to lines and texture strokes.

³⁷¹ Actually some of the older artists like Dong Xinbing did not take part in this exhibition and did not see themselves as part of this school. See Chen Xiaoxun "My Painting is not Traditional nor is it Called 'New Literati Painting'. An Interview With Dong Xinbing" *Jiangsu Huakan* 7/1989:5-7.

which had criticised the literati and had dominated Chinese art since the May the Fourth, and reached its peak in the Cultural Revolution. More importantly it was seen as a new raising of standards of "common" ink-wash painting which had gained an unprecedented level of popularisation during the 1980s.³⁷²

Pi Daojian criticised both the literati paintings and the way they had been bolstered by critics. He disagreed with the idea that China's new elite culture referred to literati painting and argued that the leisurely playfulness of the literati could not represent the mainstream of social ideals and value concepts of the contemporary intelligentsia. He added that since the Ming dynasty literati painting had not constituted an elite culture, but was merely the popularisation and digestion of the elite culture of the Song and Yuan. At best it was a glorified kind of the "academy painting" which Ming "literati" affected to despise. To him, China's new elite culture could only mean the modern intellectual artists who strove to break away from tradition.³⁷³ Like many of the avant-garde artists, Pi Daojian saw the New Literati Movement as a form of escapism.

The question then remained as to what role the artist was now meant to play? What was the way forward? Was the artist to continue to provoke society? There is a thin line between social criticism and mere sensationalism, between raising questions and answering them, between feeling a strong sense of mission and actually being able to make a strong and meaningful statement. In short some artists took themselves very seriously in the role of questioning society, whereas for others the question was not of making a u-turn, but of finding a harmonious way of existing of enjoying life, enjoying culture. This could be a reinterpretation of moral character which was not so much directed outwards to society as a whole but was more a question of self-tempering. An example of this attitude to life was described by Xu Bing at the China Modern Art Exhibition Conference.

³⁷² Zhang Huiming "Beijing New Literati Painting Theory Conference Summary" *Jiangsu Huakan* 12/1989:16-17. The "common" painting most likely referred to the work of an immense number of popular/amateur painters who turned out quantities of painting of bamboos, Xu Beihong horses and Qi Baishi prawns in the *xieyi* manner.

³⁷³ Pi Daojian "New Literati Painting" *Jiangsu Huakan* 7/1989:1-4.

A painter friend of mine once talked about a "not very normal" person in his home town, every day he needed to spend some time looking for old paper everywhere, which he took to the river to wash clean, then sheet by sheet would be mounted flat, after it had dried he would come and collect it gathering it under the *kang*, and this is all he did day after day. Indeed, my painter friend really told me about him as being a weird person, but the behaviour of this man left me thinking for a long time, then I thought this may be a form of *qigong*, a kind of Daoist way of practice and self-cultivation. The purity and unprofitability of the behaviour made the soul unperturbed and clear, in a solitary place in the busy streets detached from the mortal world. This realm of giving up one's needs to plumb the depths of the world and become enlightened transcends worldly eagerness for quick success and instant benefit and gains the ultimate comprehension of existence."³⁷⁴

The question of retirement from society or involvement in public life and society has a long tradition in Chinese culture, but changes in the last century had done much to alter what was at stake. In previous ages the cultured elite had been recruited to government office according to cultural ability. Their priorities would lie in government and public life, through which they could exert an influence on the world. Painting was a private enjoyment and although it was sometimes used for political purposes, it was rather something that recorded the individual's mood, experience and life outlook. Nowadays, however, the artist was recruited as an image-maker alone. The cultural elite only influenced the world through culture itself. Therefore there arose a disjointed imbalance between the literati attitude of enjoyment and the avant-garde's urgency for all-out involvement in society through cultural criticism.

Before any more developments occurred, however, a twist in political events once again drew artists into the fray. Increasing corruption and instability had aroused widespread dissatisfaction among China's intellectuals. On April 15th 1989, Hu Yaobang, an important member of the reform faction who had been removed from office for supporting the 1987 students' demonstration, died. His death increased the fear that the reform period would come to an end and students and intellectuals took to the streets once again.

³⁷⁴ Hang Jian and Cao Xiao'ou "China Modern Art Exhibition Sidelights" *Meishu* 4/1989:7

For several months the students occupied Tiananmen, putting pressure on the government, while the movement spread to other cities. For a time "art" itself again lost importance, as students painted slogans and created new symbols of protest such as the Goddess of Democracy. Actions of protest and actual political activism returned (as if in the Mao era) and many of the symbols which had appeared in the context of "art", the no U-turn sign (fig 7.32), figures bound from head to toe (fig 7.33) now reappeared in a purely political context.

On June 4th, troops moved into Tiananmen square with another brutal suppression, putting an end to a high tide of idealism. Once again, the people had been crushed by the government and another generation had learnt a bitter lesson. The youth who originally had no faith in the CCP had at least believed they could change China for the better. Now they had doubts about political change. In the nineties, as the government increased its drive for economic prosperity, the people too began to look for a more practical form of change. Prosperity might be the key to bring about the desired changes, the slogan "look to the future" took on a double meaning "look towards money". Behind the shift lay another great disillusionment. The "West" which had long been admired, and had given news coverage to the movement, in the crucial moment did little which might provoke the loss of its financial investments.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Concepts mark out the different cultural spaces of human thought. In the recording system of culture, using different forms of "knowledge", "thought" and "judgement", each space prepares a perfect, self-sufficient, and hence non-open-minded thought space. On entering this thought space, the starting point and end result are predestined. The infinity of a thought space can present a life-time prospect of inexhaustible exploration for present and future generations. I am calling this characteristic the "self-enclosed culture space". It could be said to be the main factor why the human spirit is "self-enclosed" by the culture machine.³⁷⁵

Sometimes, in certain ages, locations and communities, people's identity in conceptual thought has composed a cultural plot. Like concepts, the cultural plot also has the same attributes of the "self-enclosed culture space" and can be called the "self-enclosed cultural plot". The self-enclosed nature of concepts and the self-enclosed nature of the cultural plot act as two large components of the culture machine in its manipulation of human thought. The nature of culture is to negate "open thought". Hence cultural force = thought-negating culture.³⁷⁶

The individual is a vacuous concept put forward by culture. When culture invades private life on a large scale, the individual cannot escape being raped.³⁷⁷

It is hard to summarise or draw conclusions about Chinese art in the eighties. As I hope this thesis has shown, Chinese art included a huge variety of styles and directions, dealing with widely differing issues. Bearing in mind that I have only dealt with a few areas of a vast country, and that within that scope I have not really done justice to the amount of work produced (even in the case of groups and artists I have included, I have only been able to deal with a tiny proportion of their work) the reader is warned that I have presented only a small part of the whole. On the other hand, my aim was not to describe or record the art of this period, but to give some idea of the challenges that faced Chinese artists. To ask why

³⁷⁵ Jiao Yingqi Incomplete Brushstrokes text art work for the Sao Paulo Biennial, 1995.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Ni Haifeng *China's New Art, Post-1989* Hanart Gallery 1993.

they made the certain choices, what those choices signified and how they related to each other.

The criteria chosen to select artists in a certain way gave the expected results. Beneath the common ground there lies a great variety. In the end the main common factor could be said to be political. Politics was something no-one could escape from although each reacted to it in his own way. The second common factor was the institutions and organisations, including also art publications. Finally, perhaps we should also include the Cultural Revolution which was carried even to the farthest corners of China. These ten years marked the experience of all who lived through it, although of course that experience differed according to generations.

In the eighties these common factors were important not because they were accepted by all, but because they were part of the reality which people had to react to (and often against). Getting away from this common ground we can find a great deal of cultural diversity and even difference. Regional and ethnic culture began to play a greater role, and different centres became renowned for different qualities. But the really crucial difference was the return of the individual with different interests and attitudes, and his own critical outlook on life. Each, from his/her different starting point, embarked on a mission to question all preconceptions, to achieve the genuine "emancipation of thought". This involved wrestling with all the key ideas they were used to, but these proved quite tenacious.

Concepts, ideas and terminology are often misleading. Such words as "nation", "tradition", "Chinese culture" and "*guohua*" which seem to presuppose a consensus among those who used them were as often as not subject of intense debate and disagreement. Their permanence was the result of continuous negotiation. The role they played in society was so strong that they constituted part of reality even when they could not be fully justified. People resorted to them, not because they necessarily believed in them but because they seemed too real to question. Yet after the Cultural Revolution, with the collapse of utopia and the "time-gap" in relation to the West, artists were thrown into a situation where these constructs no

longer worked and they had no choice but to confront their anomalies - even if only to rebuild them.

The loss of truth - of the belief in reality which had been put forward and ingested during the Cultural Revolution left a profound crisis of faith. There grew a mistrust of presentations of reality. The individual could only rely on himself to discover reality. Consensus began to give way to diversity and pluralism. The ideas that had been simplified for mass dissemination during the Cultural Revolution began to fragment. Tradition became traditions. Eclipsed cultural heritages were rediscovered and offered different symbolic interpretations for cultural identity. The Han dynasty came to represent a primal boldness, vitality and monumentality; Chu culture meant eccentricity, unconformity, lyricism; The Warring States period meant pluralism of ideas and also the Confucian/Daoist identity - a perception of the core of national character which survived and now challenged the "new" national identity built in the Mao era. In search for terms which could accommodate such hybridity, people started resorting to such terms as "Eastern spirit" and "national soul".

As terms became vaguer it became all the more difficult to achieve consensus. Cultural identity also had to be reconciled with the desire for change and modernisation. The present position of culture was pictured as a point on a grid where the vertical axis indicated the past and future of Chinese culture, and the horizontal axis represented other cultures. Both the past and foreign cultures could be drawn on to create new Chinese culture, but national identity and future evolution still remained issues to be negotiated. Ultimately there had to be a process of selection and rejection. Individuals were forced to distinguish between what could be absorbed and what should be rejected. This soon evolved into deeper questions: On what ground should ideas be rejected and by whom? Could certain schools be simply rejected on political grounds or for being incompatible with "national character"? Did national character really matter? what was the relation between national character and universal significance? Did national character still have a role to contribute to world art? A whole string of questions stretched out from the individual to the wider world of the community - the world of consensus.

For the government it was naturally important to supply answers and guidelines, but in the new era this was not so simple. The Deng regime was trying to rid itself of the dogmatic politics of the Mao era. Politics was no longer to control art to the same extent as it had previously controlled society and thought itself. Deng's was not a vision of an ultimate utopian goal, but simply one of progress and modernisation. The reforms, he took were open-ended, following the idea of "take one step and then decide on the next". There were no ultimate truths, and it has often been suggested that many of his reforms were not really socialist in essence. The words "socialist" in such terms as "socialist commodity economy", "socialist democracy" and "socialist morality" had become a code meaning simply "under the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party."³⁷⁸ "Socialist spiritual civilisation" was yet another of these euphemisms.

The ideas put forward by the Party representatives in official organisations such as the Chinese Artists Association and art academies were largely reliant on old formula such as studying the Marxism to improve one's ideology, and learn from the new life and new people of the new era. Culture was not on the agenda of the Four Modernisations. Culture was required not so much to modernise itself, but simply to reflect and depict modernisation in the areas covered by the Four Modernisations.

Modernisation also had another important aspect, namely the importation of foreign technology, knowledge and ideas. Here again a distinction was made between culture and the areas under the Four Modernisations. It effectively made a distinction between culture and knowledge, science, technology - things which could be taken as culturally neutral. It was important that modernisation was not seen as being Westernisation which would imply both "capitalist decadence" and loss of national identity. In the event, however, the pictures most official artists were turning out and encouraging students to produce were nostalgic pictures of the countryside. It was as if while the whole lifestyle, economy, environment and society of China was changing irreversibly, the underdeveloped hinterland had been made a reservoir where genuine national culture was preserved. So there was quite a lot of irony in

³⁷⁸ Burton, Charles *Political and Social Change in China Since 1978* New York 1990.

the situation of official artists, living in an urban, decreasingly "Chinese" environment, painting what were really very beautiful pictures about a reality which was in fact quite remote. When Zhang Peili and Geng Jianyi's cool depictions of modernity (in the New Space exhibition) cleansed their pictures of reassuringly Chinese elements, people were tricked into attributing their unease to Western influence.

The question of how art was to retain national identity involved the question of cultural boundaries. But here again there was a problem. Do cultural boundaries exist? Are they artificially imposed? During the eighties, the cultural origin of ideas was not only constantly questioned, but was also constantly manipulated to suit different agendas. The idea of what constituted "Chinese culture" was always open to reinterpretation, and to exclude certain ideas or cultural models on the grounds of "cultural difference" became increasingly difficult. This was particularly so when Chinese society had embarked on a project of modernisation. Could a distinction be drawn between culture and knowledge when even the native origin of the "rationality" central to modernity was disputed?³⁷⁹

Knowledge cannot be presented as being separate from culture, and new ideas have an uncanny ways of dispersing across cultures. Consider the speed with which the ideas of science, democracy and Marxism were introduced to and found adherents in China. Whereas one could say that such ideas in themselves are culturally neutral (they are not necessarily Western but merely originated in the West), the role they played was not neutral. The whole perception and structure of Chinese culture changed under their influence. Furthermore, when Marxist historicism was described as scientific and the whole of society was roused to comply with its laws of development the idea of the cultural neutrality of science or knowledge had to be set aside.

Chinese culture had already been radically altered by new imported ideas. Incoming ideas had not so much met with cultural boundaries, but with attempts to retain initiative, to be able to decide what one wants and adapt ideas to local conditions. The exclusion of certain ideas and styles was largely imposed by authorities and dominant groups. Their

³⁷⁹ Wang Jing, *High Culture Fever. Politics, Aesthetics and Ideology in Deng's China*. University of California Press 1996.

discourse was only effective however under total and imposed consensus. Without this the simple act of repetition flawed all arguments about essential differences between cultures. In this context the links between the individual and his culture must have been felt to be very tenuous. The argument that one should learn both Chinese and Western painting, but learn the former first so that it will take deeper root, acknowledges the fragility of this link. The idea of a "culture gene", although it was used figuratively, showed a deep-seated desire to find an intrinsic link between the individual and his culture.³⁸⁰

At the level of the individual, cultural negotiation was a convoluted affair. For the generation which had grown up during the Cultural Revolution, both traditional and Western culture were new to them. Playing one off against the other was one of the important strategies for the individual to be able to retain the initiative and not to have one version of tradition imposed on him. Choice became an act of mentally positioning yourself within current discourse, and could also involve a temporal aspect - waiting until certain values would become popular once more. All this involved constant self-examination and repositioning oneself in the world.³⁸¹

By the end of the decade most artists had come to accept modernism in art, although they might not appreciate works which did not have a physical permanence and enduring value (such as action art and installations). On the whole, however, they were open to outside ideas and tolerant of other artists' works. When after June the 4th the Party wheeled out the old faithfuls to criticise modern art, their arguments had none of the subtlety of the ideas being discussed among artists:

³⁸⁰ Some people, however, did take such intrinsic links seriously. On a visit to the Nanjing artist Dong Xinbing, he showed me a thick manuscript for a book he was writing connecting the five different coloured races of mankind to some particular essence of culture. (e.g. Western culture was symbolised by the use of romanised script and its essence was logic). So far as I know the book was never published.

³⁸¹ As the Yunnan woodcut theorist, Li Zhongxiang wrote at the end of the decade "I would like to go back to a particular point I made a year ago about Yunnan art 'growing roots in the native soil and facing the world, growing roots in tradition and facing the modern'. I would like to slightly revise it, and change it to 'standing in the modern and evaluating the traditional; standing in the world and evaluating native resources; standing sure of myself and facing society'. Establishing a pluralistic direction which has the modern, the world and the self as its critical axis, this is our new idea and quest." Li Zhongxiang "Yunnan Prints and Traditional Ethnic Culture" original manuscript submitted for *Minzu Yishu Yanjiu* in 1989

If someone thinks he doesn't come from his mother, and doesn't need his mother let us consider what kind of feeling this is. Of course the Western conception of values is different to ours, we have our own national sentiments. On the soil of our China the people are masters of the state, they are the creators of material and spiritual wealth. They have unlimited wisdom and strength and are an inexhaustible spring for literary and artistic creation. But on the other hand there are those who proclaim that literature and art needs to "express the self" and be "centred on the self". They deny the splendid tradition of our literature and art and consider the literature and art of the masses before them to be of a lower stratum, and that which no one can understand they consider to be of a higher stratum. The works at the February 1989 "Modern Chinese Art Exhibition" at the China Art Gallery in Beijing were absurd and bizarre and were clearly influenced by the new currents of Western art.³⁸²

Such arguments which could easily have been written ten years earlier were unlikely to convince people. In fact, the avant-garde artists they targeted were well beyond the reach of such appeals. They were characterised by the art critic Liao Wen (b.1961) as "unrepentant prodigal sons".³⁸³ New trends of political pop and cynical realism poked fun at the core of Party discourse.³⁸⁴ Wang Guangyi's paintings combined revolutionary workers with Western commercial brand names. Fang Lijun's rows of laughing, identical bald figures hinted at the disturbing notion that we're all the same and everything's great.

The period of questioning everything, however, seemed to be over. The student movement and June the Fourth had brought China to the eyes of the world, and beginning in 1993 Chinese artists began to be exhibited abroad on a large scale. For those remaining in China cynicism or disillusionment with the West in the aftermath of June the Fourth settled into a clever exploitation of the West's expectations of Chinese art.³⁸⁵ For those who wished to continue the social mission of art and interact directly with the public the situation was harder, action art was virtually outlawed, installations were rarely allowed in exhibitions.

³⁸² Gu Yuan quoted in Clark, John "Official Reactions to Modern Art in China since the Beijing Massacre" *Pacific Affairs* vol65.no3(Fall 1992):334-352

³⁸³ Liao Wen "Unrepentant Prodigal Sons: The Temper of Contemporary Chinese Art" *China's New Art Post 1989* Hanart Gallery 1993.

³⁸⁴ Li Xianting "The Imprisoned Heart. Ideology in the Age of Consumption" *Art and Asia Pacific* Vol 1.no2(1994)25-30.

³⁸⁵ Barmé, Geremie "Exploit, Export, Expropriate: Artful Marketing from China 1989-1993. *China's New Art Post 1989* Hanart Gallery 1993.

Many artworks came to take on the form of written projects that were published in occasional one-off books. Many important art publications within China were also closed down (*Huajia*, *Zhongguo Meishubao*, *Meishu Sichao*), and artists began to publish instead in Hong Kong or Taiwanese magazines. In a way the avant-garde regained its underground status which it was threatening to lose in 1989.

For many Chinese artists, however, the challenge lay elsewhere. The number of artists who had moved to the West greatly increased after 1989, and they began to work their way into the Western art world. The challenge they faced, however, was now quite different.³⁸⁶ Western culture no longer became a liberating strategy within a self-enclosed system. Nor was artists work seen in the context of a Chinese art world and art history. Having to a large extent liberated themselves from confining notions of Chineseness and identity, artists once again found themselves redefined as Chinese, this time from the outside.

³⁸⁶ Hou Hanru "Departure Lounge Art. Chinese Artists Abroad" *Art and Asia Pacific* Vol 1.no2(1994)36-41

Appendix I: Translations

1. Renmin Meishu Editorial 1/1950

The Chinese people greet 1950 with incomparable joy. This is the first new year for the Chinese people who have suffered a long bitter struggle and obtained victory. It is the first new year after the founding of the People's Republic which represents the aspirations of the Chinese people. Its arrival symbolises the well-being of the people. Its arrival announces that revolutionary struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party has already entered a new great task, to build an independent, prosperous and strong, peaceful, and free new country. The people will struggle to achieve this task with incomparable enthusiasm. Art workers of the whole of the Chinese nation as fighters for the revolutionary cause, like the people also welcome this new year, and will use a hundredfold effort to learn and to work, hoping that when the time comes to greet the second new year they will have achieved great success worthy of building a new China.

At present, the main task before the art workers is to publicise the common political programme of the people's political consultative conference. This kind of publicity is not an interpretation of abstract clauses; this publicity must be made through lively imagery. Therefore art-workers must throw themselves wholeheartedly into the process of giving expression to the programme by going to experience and master brand new images, new events and new people. The maker himself must be a person of the new era. If his thoughts and feelings are still stopping him from becoming a new person, then he must reform himself to become worthy of the title of revolutionary art worker and to participate in the building of new China. If an individual art-worker has had the correct understanding of the reality of New China obscured by old artistic ideas, and so cannot reflect new things in the process of giving expression to the common guiding principle, then he must actively participate in mass struggle and activities of national construction, to learn the thoughts and feelings of the masses.

Finally, we here announce the decision of the standing committee of the artists association: to hold a national exhibition on the first of October 1950 to commemorate one year since the founding of the central people's government, to celebrate this great festival, and at the same time also to review the achievements in art work over the last year. This exhibition must be an artistic reflection of the implementation of the common programme of the people's political consultative conference, which is precisely the artistic reflection of the great New China and of the Chinese people who have stood up. We ardently hope that artists and art groups prepare as soon as possible and obtain the necessary help and assistance before producing works in order to victoriously accomplish this task.

This is to say they must unconditionally take part in industry, commerce, countryside and military camps, unite with the masses, and feel and experience the implementation of the common programme in all aspects of its economic, political, cultural and military construction process, to [be able to] reflect this situation with moving images, and so stop non-realist formalism from raising its head.

In order to reflect the appearance of New China correctly and profoundly, the maker must have the correct standpoint, opinion and method. He must study policies, study Marxism and tightly bind frequent economic studies with creative activities, only in this way can reflecting reality not be superficial or even distorted, and can raise the ideological and artistic level of artwork.

Needless to say that thematically, new paintings should have the subject matter of typical people and incidents taken from the daily life of the new society (heroic models and their exemplary achievements); but this does not mean excluding other related subject matter connected, such as revolutionary history and so on. We can choose any subject so long as it enlightens, heartens and educates the masses as to the positive aspects of constructing a new China, making the masses more united, more resolute, more optimistic, more courageous, so that it is beneficial to the task of constructing a new China.

Different expressive forms are permitted, the people welcome all manner of original expressive forms. Whether it is painting, printing, sculpture, architectural design, or new year

pictures, strip cartoons, slides, papercuts, or pictorials, posters, illustrations and decorative arts, all can serve as very good models, so long as they meet the appreciative requirements of the masses.

Art workers must get to work with great enthusiasm, seeking to make 1950 an even richer harvest. Let us use such methods as creation competitions to set off a creative craze! We must not for one second forget the needs of the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, we must cooperate very well with folk artisans, to help them and raise their standards, to strive together in the task of popularising the people's art. We must encourage each other, help each other, strengthen criticism and self criticism, this is a necessary condition to guarantee to fulfil the task of creation and popularisation.

2. "On Reforming Chinese Painting" by Li Keran

We only need to research the history of the development of Chinese art, to know that six or seven hundred years ago, Chinese painting was going downhill, together with the decline of feudal society. The rule of the Yuan dynasty Mongolian slave-owning aristocracy over the Chinese slaves had a devastating effect on Chinese culture. At the time, the traitor Zhao Mengfu, scholar official Ke Jiusi, laid down the basis for the formalists of the Ming and Qing dynasty by proposing 'fugu' [returning to the past] and that 'painting and calligraphy come from the same source'. Most other artists of patriotic moral integrity, from the shame and humiliation of being under the rule of a foreign nationality, all took the passive road 'fleeing to the forest' using 'poetry and painting to amuse themselves', and so helped bring about the development of subjectivist literati painting. Ni Yunlin, a typical representative of the literati painting once said: 'I do not seek formal likeness but simply paint for my own pleasure' He spared no effort to sacrifice objective 'formal likeness' in order to emphasise subjective "untrammelled spirit", making Chinese painting only accessible to a small clique, so that of course it also lost widespread appreciation. He dragged Chinese painting that was originally united in form and spirit, with objective and subjective developing in harmony,

down a biased, morbid path which neglected objective reality and broke away from the life of the people.

When we get to the Ming and Qing dynasties, looking at it from the whole history of the development of painting, Chinese painting could be said to be taking the most rotten downward path. The main reason was of course the situation where feudal society was already gradually facing its collapse, so art which served the the feudal class was also declining with it. From the painters Zhao Yuan, Zhou Cu and Sheng Zhu falling out of favour and being executed at the beginning of the Ming we know that the rule of the feudal rulers at the time towards Chinese painting was also extremely severe. Some so-called 'orthodox' scholar-official painters were also willingly deceived by the rulers, and with the 'eight-legged essay' of the old examination system carried Chinese painting into the trap of formalism. The greatest mistake of this time was that most painters already no longer knew how to draw out the creative content from an objective environment, but used all their efforts to imitate the works of the ancients, making Chinese painting one step further divorced from reality, divorced from the people, travelling several hundred years in insignificant problems.

Dong Qichang of the late Ming and early Qing, because he was a favourite of the [future] Kangxi emperor, had the worst influence on Qing dynasty painting. His works we can leave aside for the moment, if we look at him as a the initiator of a theory, he really can be counted as no small a criminal. Firstly, he rigidly divided Chinese painting into the Northern and Southern schools, and rejected Northern school painting as being artisan's painting, causing a split to appear in Chinese painting which originally could have developed in unison. He built a chasm between the two, strengthened the concept of schools, cut down the expressive range of Chinese painting, and prevented the diversified development of techniques. Secondly, he was also a staunch activist of returning to the past, although he had a saying of 'travelling ten thousand miles', from his practice (ie. works) he was not able to really realise this. On the contrary, his works everywhere speak of imitation, seeking [stylistic] precedents, making later painters under his influence not dare to stray one step from the ancients, and not dare to make a false move in brushwork away from the ancients.

The four Wangs of the Qing dynasty could be said to have emerged under his direct influence, and among the four Wangs there were three who used all their life efforts to copy Huang Zijiu [Huang Gongwang]. We know Huang Zijiu was a nature lover. Painting history records 'one should always have some sketching brushes in a leather bag, then when one happens in a beautiful spot, one can sketch and record immediately'. For years he lived in the Fuchun mountains and produced the famous Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains. However, the three Wangs shut themselves in a room, lifelessly copying his 'brush method'. If we compare the works of the three Wangs with those of Huang Zijiu, we can come to understand the formalist three Wangs, fundamentally had no understanding of Huang Zijiu.

In order to satisfy the demands of 'formalism', Wang Kai of the early Qing exhausted the greatest effort, and completed the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. He took nature as an 'integral whole' and 'dissected it into countless fragments'. A landscape, for example, he would divide it into: method for painting trees; method for painting mountains; method for painting /dwellings, and method for painting bridges and boats....A tree would also be divided into method of painting branches and method of painting leaves. A leaf would also be divided into [dotting] in groups of five, [dotting like] watergrass, [dotting in the forms of the characters] 𠀤 and 𠀥 ... taking this to an extreme, a branch, a few orchid leaves, first stroke, second stroke third stroke the order of precedence, all was made into inflexible rules. It may well be asked that with such painting methods, did Chinese painting still have any room for movement and development. The so-called 'all the parts complementing each other' actually also chopped to death all vitality. At this point a very brief story comes to mind. Shortly after I arrived in Beijing, I heard there was a famous connoisseur in Beijing, who had this very conceited saying about the authentication of ancient paintings: 'seeing characters and paintings, two inches was enough to know'. By this he meant there was no need to completely unroll a work, just by opening two inches he could determine whether it was real or a fake, excellent or low quality. Suddenly hearing this, it seemed like a joke, but thinking over it carefully this connoisseur had indeed made no mistake, because formalism had developed to a peak, that such a painting that necessarily

paid attention to every brushstroke and every mark also naturally exterminated form, such painting could be appreciated in this way. For example, Wang Yuanqi's lines were held to be 'steel rods'. Originally the strength of lines was to be praised, but later these steel rods broke away from content, existing on their own and becoming soulless marks. With such paintings, [the idea that] 'two inches is enough to know' really is to 'suit the medicine to the illness', an extremely appropriate method of appreciation!

To begin with the emergence of form was originally the expression of laws great artists rescued from mixed and disorderly images. There is no reason why we should not 'borrow' these [laws] as 'lenses' [with which to observe nature], but formalism takes them as rope to tightly bind itself, leaving no freedom of movement, which is why some people criticise such painting as 'constrained like a prisoner'. Comparing formalism to a convict with one foot in the grave is a very good description.

Consequently, just talking about form alone, it has already broken away from the broad masses of the people and has already early on cooled before the main audience.

3. "A Letter from the Creator of My Father" by Luo Zhongli

Comrades:

Hello. Since you left Chongqing, the Provincial Youth Exhibition has come to a close. In this short time I have received letter after letter from comrades who are complete strangers giving me enthusiastic encouragement.

Among the letters there were some people who used their respective experiences and thoughts to analyse and understand this work. Many talked about this picture more, and more rationally than I myself. Other letters only gave their simple impressions. Relatively speaking, I preferred the latter kind because I had never thought about so many ideas at all, and I did not start off with a certain kind of reasoning. In short it was probably the result of my long term intense impressions of the peasants, what I wanted was to say a few truths on behalf of the peasants, that is why my strong enthusiasm was so high that I was capable of painting it in the thirty seven, thirty eight degrees of summer, merely wearing a pair of

underpants in a fifth floor attic. I used all my efforts to express all that I know - all of the peasants' character and details. In the whole process of making the picture, this was my only intention.

I did not think about technique, I just wanted to get as much detail as possible, the more the better. I had previously seen some portrait paintings by an American photo realist painter and this impression actually determined the form of the painting, because I felt this form could give me the most strength in powerfully conveying the whole of my feelings and thoughts. Eastern and Western art have always been assimilating to each other and drawing on each other. Form and technique are only the language which convey my thoughts and feelings. If a particular language is capable of expressing what I want to say, I use it.

Apart from my day to day understanding of the peasants, and contact with them, the production of the composition of this picture began after I saw a peasant dung-guarder. The toilets of Chongqing are all allocated to the peasants of the neighbouring counties. In order to prevent other production brigades from stealing dung from their own, each toilet has a peasant to guard it, and in some of the big ones there are even some sheds built by the peasants for long term guard residences. Even so there are always incidents when people come to blows and tear at each other in order to get the dung.

It was on the New Year's eve of 1975, rain and snow were continuously dashing down, it was extremely cold, next to a public toilet close to our home, a middle-age peasant was keeping guard. In the early morning I noticed how he tended to stand stiffly upright in the snow and rain. He used a characteristic gesture of the peasants to stand a carrying pole against the wall next to the cess pit, with his body resting on it, both hands tucked in his sleeves, numb and slow, he was silently puffing a pipe. All the way till evening he never moved from there, the only difference was that he changed postures [sometimes]. The merry eve of the lunar new year arrived, the surrounding buildings simultaneously emitted warm light, and [the sounds] of merrymaking, music and firecrackers mingled with the shouts of people playing finger guessing games... all blurred into one. But this peasant who had left his home to guard the toilets seemed to have been forgotten. His slow and numbed bearing

formed an intense sharp contrast to the surrounding environment. He also had a home, his sons and daughters were still anxiously expecting him to return home for the family gathering. At that moment, what was going through his mind? Perhaps he only had one thought, he hoped the cess-pit would quickly fill up so he could earn a few more work points and could transform them in to some grain to support his family and support the people...

With the depth of night, the waves of the sounds of New Year's Eve merrymaking gradually subsided. The last time I went to the toilet I could see that he was still there under the dim light. The icy cold night had 'pressed' him into the corner of the wall by the cess pit, his body shrunk into a ball, and his eyes, a pair of cow or sheep-like eyes still deadly fixed on the cess pit, like a man pressed into a dead end, who apart from protecting himself, is by no means prepared to act like a rebel. At that moment, a quiver ran through my heart. Pity, sympathy, and deep sighs all at once possessed me. The Yang Bai laos³⁸⁷, Xianglin saos, Run Tu's Ah Qs of life, and of the works, and the foreign world all chaotically pressed before my vision. I did not know what he had eaten that day to tide him over. I went home and fetched two new year cakes for him, and for a long time he did not utter a word. He really was a good, honest, simple-minded peasant, and almost certainly because he was too honest and simple-minded, they got him to do this hard and unprofitable job. That is the way things are, honest and simple-minded peasants always get the worst of it. That, I know. 'I wanted to cry out for them!' and this was my earliest impulse in composing this picture. At the start, I painted the dung-guarding peasant, then I repainted it into a peasant acting as a red guard in the Ba mountains, and only in the end did I paint My Father. The original name was Every Grain of Rice is Hard Work. Later, a teacher suggested I should change it to My Father at that moment, I suddenly felt that all my thoughts and feelings had been put into words.³⁸⁸

Standing before the gigantic portrait of Father can produce an intense effect on the visual senses, this was the reason why I did all I could do to enlarge the size of this painting.

³⁸⁷ Yang Bailao is an old man from the opera of the White Haired Girl, father of the girl who was raped by the landlord and died of grief. Xianglinsao was the old maid from Lu Xun's short story whose baby got eaten by wolves.

³⁸⁸ The picture was originally entitled My Father but was later retitled just Father, and is usually referred to by the latter title

If the painting was reduced to half the size, the effect would be completely different, so its bigness is also an element in my language. It is only in this way that in front of this gigantic head, I can be made to feel the penetrating cow or sheeplike look of the eyes, Hear his heavy panting, his veins pulsing, his blood rushing, [smell] his peculiar scent of tobacco and the strong sweet smell of sweat, feel the trembling of his skin see the tears of sweat seep out from the miniscule pores and even his dry split anxious lips. From the one remaining tooth it is as if you could see what things that mouth had actually eaten a whole lifetime, how many bitter herb/, how much rice? ...Father, this then is the father that gave birth to me and nurtured me, who of all the people who stand before such an honest, kind-hearted and hard-working father will not be moved. ? What kind of thoughts can they have? Is it possible that those people do not understand and would not love such a father?!

Some people wrote a letter saying My Father moved them to tears, one peasant's letter said that the person in the picture is an old peasant on their production brigade and he also said that the people supported this kind of creation. These words determined the road I wanted to take. In expressing the peasants I paint the ordinary life of the Daba mountain peasants which I know so well, I painted their joys and sorrows, loves and hates, birth and death. I feel works should have characteristics of the people (a popular feeling) works should give rise to a kind of communication on the level of feeling with the majority of the audience and create a sympathetic response. To achieve this, what is important is to have a solid foundation of life and authentic emotions.

Next year, for graduation I intend to paint a series of "peasant" pictures, I have already drafted some sketches, and it is a pity that since last time you could not have given some opinions of them, let us hear your opinions next time.

Luo Zhongli 14/12/1980

4. "The Revelation of the New Age" by Zhang Qun and Meng Luding

"Why not eat the fruits of paradise?"

"God has forbidden it. If you eat them, your eyes become bright and you can distinguish good from evil." Adam and Eve's rebellious act brought a revolution. From ignorance they entered civilisation, from natural heavenly people, they became earthly lovers, from the imprisonment of the Garden of Eden they came to the freedom of the earth. The story of them breaking the commandments and shackles of heaven made us contemplate the past, present and future.

The limited nature of writing makes it hard to encompass the capacity of a visual work, using visual means is a way for the author to communicate with the viewer. Any verbal explanation by the author can only limit the recipient's interpretation. Thus, we can only explain the aim of our plan to reach the unknown.

To youths, all existing conclusions are questionable. The pressure of the age forces us reflect on the past. The existing order is less and less suitable for us. We are dissatisfied with the past and want to breach it, to develop. Development means destruction; destruction means creation. Continuous creation propels the extension of human civilisation.

"Freedom of Creation" stimulates us, encourages us to courageously reevaluate existing art models and frameworks.

Many of the realist works that emerged in the last few years heavily reflected artists' wounds and painful memories. We acknowledge the weight of these works, but their ideas tend towards direct reflection and literary narrative. They belong to the category of explicit reality. The limited scope of subject-matter often hinders the creation process.

The criteria of "likeness" to judge art, based on the one-sided understanding of the principle that art grows out of real life, has led to a single path of creation. The manifested style within this congealed model means only to show character by reflecting [reality] through the "mirror" of one's personality. Similar ways of thinking and common methods of observation made everyone fall into one creative standard. [However], our minds have been

assaulted in every hour and every minute by a new era with new concepts and a new consciousness, and we were forced to fundamentally renew our concepts and explore new routes for art.

We discovered that our previous understanding of the source of art was, in fact the visual appearance of reality, which we regarded as "objective" reality. We hardly realised that the thinking in the brain is also a kind of reality, it is a hidden reality, but it also has its own fixed nature. The artist can not only use his "materialist" observation, he can also use his "only ideal" faculty to feel out the world he lives in. Different worlds exist in different people's eyes. Why should we limit such understanding with the senses to a single, set form? Using mind to correspond with "subjective" reality will necessarily result in entirely new thoughts, entirely new perspectives, creating new artistic spaces and leading to a change in concepts. When one shifts from reflecting objective reality to expressing the hidden world, one no longer seeks outer likeness, but aims at the completeness of the inner mind and the integrity of the individuality, seeking a spiritual realm and a different creative path from the past.

This creative method derives from a spiritual source. Its main line of thought is entirely conceptual and subjective, so it relies on intuition and sub consciousness to compose, to rearrange images, to transmit a kind of philosophy, and to abandon the ontological significance of the object to give a new meaning. It breaks free from the ties of natural time-space, expanding itself beyond the world directly known by the senses. This spiritual activity can only produce trans-natural imagination and ideas, and enter the intuitive realm of the ideal when not being limited by direct perception. Thought can be direct, indirect, flat or multifaceted. It can search in the macroscopic, or select from the microscopic. There are numerous incidents in life that can trigger off a composition. Source material can be infinite. Apart from this, the materials can also be treated more as one wishes, any elements in reality can be selected, even those which are seemingly completely unrelated to each other can be rearranged to suit the intention of the picture. In In the New Era, the bringing together of Adam, Eve and the modern youth, the echoing of the great wall and the skyscrapers, the

juxtaposing of the blue sky and the earth, and the harmonising of the forbidden fruit and the time frames in the centre of the picture with the surrounding components, all aim to give expression to a general significance of eternity.

This method is not conceptualisation. Conceptualisation tends towards regularisation, limitation, whereas this is an art based on thought and spiritual activity. This method is not a groundless, subjective fabrication. The concept it conveys gives it a certain tendentiousness which does not restrain the viewer's free associations. This art method is different from Freud's stream of consciousness. Stream of consciousness cuts off the consciousness of the mind, and can only make it sink into absurdity and the unfathomable. Yet this time-space is deliberately arranged. Hence it is the trace of the thought and the shadow of spiritual activity. What it expresses is different from illustrative narrative painting - which does no more than painting which adulterates literary logic; it is also different from works of purely visual stimulation - those are no more than pictures which project physical stimulus to obtain sensory enjoyment. Through the connection of the various elements it leads the viewer to think and make associations. If we give this method a name, we can tentatively call it "concept art" (different from Western concept art).

In The New Era is really an experiment that aims to use new ways of thinking and angles of observation. Although it gave rise to controversy both before and after it was exhibited - some praised it others criticised it, its reputation rose and fell - the reception itself showed it has a new vitality. The age has made us different from the past and different from the future. The modern current prompts us to discover ourselves, to create ourselves, to transcend ourselves, to gauge reality and design the future taking every individual into account. In this way there can be no fixed model or matrix to confine art creation, and this will inevitably bring a diversified and individualised new world. Contemporary artists must understand themselves, find the meaning of their existence, and be courageous in getting rid of old idea from the past which still exist or are taking shape in the mind.

The human body can be very inspiring. In China because of many outdated concepts of feudal moral ethics, people aren't face nudes in art, and even misinterpret and suppress

them so that they have never appeared in national exhibitions. The reason does not lie in a lack of a taste for appreciating nudes in art, but is a prejudiced understanding of humanity. Linking it to pornography can only be an expression of ignorance. In the New Age is a wish to volunteer an opinion so that others follow suit, to enable nudes to be justifiably dragged into the Chinese art world. It was lucky the painting was finally exhibited.

Of course, we are still young, we are at the stage of exploring art, but we think the significance of this artwork does not lie in that it has a new form, but in that it attempts to break through previous patterns and frames of observation. We hope this as yet immature work will be like a stone thrown in a pond, breaking the placid surface and making ripples.

5. "My Opinion of Contemporary Chinese Painting" by Li Xiaoshan

Saying that "Chinese painting has come to a dead end" has become a fashion in the art world. However, this does not mean that people who say this really understand the present situation of Chinese painting in this way. The facts are more complex than we imagine. Contemporary Chinese painting is at a turning point between crises and rebirth, destruction and creation; the vexation, perplexity, introspection and reflection experienced by contemporary Chinese painters has reflected the peculiarity of historical evolution. There is nothing more difficult than being a Chinese painter in our era, the double burdens of objective pressure and subjective dissatisfaction, have greatly restricted creative talent. Indeed, to accept the challenge of the demands of the age is a rigorous trial for contemporary Chinese artists.

As one form of feudal ideology, traditional Chinese painting was rooted in an absolutely closed autocratic society. Based on the feudal ethical code³⁸⁹ 'heaven is unchanging, the Way is also unchanging', in over two thousand years of history, from

³⁸⁹ *san gang wu chang* the three cardinal guides [ruler guides the subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife] and the five constant virtues [benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity] as specified in the feudal ethical code.

Confucius to Sun Yatsen, the surprising stability of Chinese feudal society has profoundly restricted the development of art as an ideology. Both in form and content, the course of Chinese painting, from its birth, through development, to its decline, has basically kept a level pace with society and hardly any sudden changes or leaps have occurred. The history of Chinese painting is actually a history of continuous perfection of technical rendering (a formalised art method used to pursue a 'realm of the mind') and a continuous reduction of painting concepts (aesthetic experience).

It is not hard to understand that the evolution of painting forms, from early Chinese painting (painting on silk, murals, stone reliefs) to late literati painting, was that the dots, lines, colour and ink which were at first purely about form were gradually superseded and such formal symbols themselves were bestowed with abstract aesthetic meaning. One could say that growth in the abstract aesthetic interest of Chinese painting (due to the emphasis on the use of brush of calligraphy) indicated a tightening of the standards of Chinese painting forms; As a result, when the technical mastery of Chinese painting reached its zenith, it became a rigid, abstract form. In this way, artists no longer the opened new painting concepts, but used a stereotyped technical art to pursue a 'realm of the mind' and this became the strongest element of the conservatism of late Chinese painting.

Of course the 'stagnation' of the development of traditional Chinese painting was not just influenced by the element of feudal conservatism. The weakness of Chinese painting theory, also greatly restricted Chinese painting practice. The whole meaning of Chinese painting theory is not in its guiding painting in how to fundamentally observe and explore the beauty of changing life: Chinese painting theory is an account of experience which is characterised as "stressing method at the expense of theory". It derives from a great amount of practise, and is influenced by the national characteristic of stressing practise and making light of theory. Its merits often fell into oblivion among quantities of long winded and

repetitive methodology. The 'six laws' in fact became the highest criteria for aesthetic judgment and creation methods of Chinese painting (Although after Xie He devised his 'six laws' artists and theorists throughout the ages have all added something, nobody revised them to any significant degree). If painting theory does not provide painting practice with dialectical theory of knowledge, and does not fundamentally guide practice in how to open up new aesthetic concepts, but stops at vulgarly emphasising master and pupil relations, emphasising specific painting techniques, or bringing up some vague[perhaps incisive] views, then it's very difficult for it to guide continuous creative innovation in painting practice. Everyone knows the development of history is the dialectical unity of continuity and interruption, gradual progress and revolution. When the accumulation of social progress reaches a stage of leaping[forwards], a completely new epoch making theory needs to emerge- a revelation and prediction about social development observed from the height of intelligence of the age, which quickly promotes the launching of social practice. Vanguardism in theory, however, is limited by objective conditions and by theoretical tradition itself. Under our present historical situation, it is not a question of amending or supplementing Chinese painting theory but of making a fundamental overhaul.

In this situation we must abandon the old system of theory and rigidified understanding of art, and focus our emphasis on the question of modern painting concepts. Painting concepts indicates a series of component elements controlling painting creation: the artists' understanding of theme, the treatment of the technical methods used with regard to what one wants to express and how to form a unique 'visual language' different from [that of] other sensory stimuli. The change of painting concepts are the start of the painting revolution. This is what we must base our understanding and evaluation of contemporary Chinese painting. New painting concepts are not born out of thin air, they must certainly absorb outstanding traditional heritage. However, so-called artistic inheritance is of course a pile of dead objects, from which one can pick and choose at will things which one needs at the time and which are thrown together again according to the needs of the moment. The outstanding heritage of Chinese painting means that spiritual essence which fuses together space, time and the

observer himself. In terms of ideal and mood which the maker as the observer projects onto the subject he is depicting, Chinese painting practice fits in very well with the spirit of modern science (such as in relativism and quantum theory...), just as the German physicist [Werner] Heisenberg said "What we see is not nature itself, but the nature understood through the way we ask questions".³⁹⁰ Indeed, what modern Chinese painting wants to carry forward is this kind of spirit of Eastern art held high above the temple of art. To have understood this much is not to take new painting concepts as abstract idea patterns.

Well, what after all is the aspect of Chinese painting that we want to innovate? When we open a picture album or unceasingly praise the paintings of Fan Kuan and Zhu Da in a museum, we have shown two things: one is that when we are enjoying looking at the picture, we are being firmly controlled by preconceived aesthetic notions; two, is that these works really are able to strike a responsive chord in our aesthetic sentiment and formal impressions. We readily admit the greatness of the ancients and our own insignificance. This most clearly reveals the fact that as long as we continue to be infatuated with the art forms the ancients created and view Chinese painting through the eyes of tradition we will feebly admit the ancients are wiser than we are, and may prostrate ourselves obediently under the might of the ancients. Hence we can see, that the first task in innovating Chinese painting is to change our worship of that set of strict formal standards/norms, and break out from the various formal frames.

When Chinese painting developed to the age of Ren Bonian, Wu Changshuo and Huang Binhong, it had already entered its final phase (figure, bird and flower and shanshui those who epitomised these). Despite Chinese artists not having given up continuing to industriously plough the garden of Chinese painting, the fruits of their labour has been very meagre. When we see a great number of very talented artists still defending art concepts which are obviously outdated, and who indeed have wasted so much energy in practice, one can only feel deep regret for them; when quite a few pure essence school artists who profess

³⁹⁰ I think the original reads "natural science does not simply explain and describe nature, it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves" (*Physics and Beyond*) I have left the literal translation from the Chinese because I am not sure if this is the right quotation.

themselves to be 'above politics and worldly considerations' - particularly some briefly influential' older artists - cast a disdainful look at the real movement for artistic innovation, we think this is not to be 'above politics and worldly consideration, but being foolish and lazy. Those who are not clean of politics nor above worldly considerations, trying to play the role of a modern Don Quixote, can only make a laughing stock of themselves". Schiller said the dangerous menace is extreme vulgarity. The most detestable vulgarity is to idle one's time away and muddle along. The essence of art is continuous creation, to negate this much would be to turn art into a handicraft or a profession to make a living.

It has to be admitted that the efforts of contemporary Chinese painters have not all been a complete waste of time. They have understood that traditional Chinese painting is already senile, panting asthmatically behind the life of the age, absorbing only remnants of cultural heritage. The painters Liu Haisu, Shi Lu, Zhu Qizhan and Lin Fengmian began their artistic career exactly under the influence of the thought currents of the new age. They did not raise a cry of warning [loudly appeal to the public] about the urgency of artistic innovation, yet in practice they nevertheless played the role of inheriting the past and ushering in the future. Although their painting concepts were limited to the scope of traditional thought, this certainly did not prevent them from opening up the practice of new aesthetic experiences. What encouraged them to do this was that they had the insight of artistic genius and the unrestrainable creative spirit of artists. As outstanding representatives of contemporary Chinese painting, of course they cannot be counted as epoch-making masters; but they should enjoy the greatest honour as artists who drew Chinese painting towards the great door of modern painting. The evaluation of an artist's position in art history, is mainly decided by seeing if he has made any breakthroughs in painting form, or any opening up of painting concepts. So the basis for making a positive appraisal of such outstanding artists as Liu Haisu lies in that their creation added something new to the continuation of Chinese painting.

If Liu Haisu, Shi Lu, Zhu Qizhan and Lin Fengmian tended towards modernity in painting (of course, viewpoints of modern painting are rarely expressed in their works), then

the works of Pan Tianshou and Li Keran embody a greater ingredient of reason. They did not exceed the orbit of traditional Chinese painting they only wanted to spend time on the aspect of discovering new subject matter in life. They took certain traditional techniques to an extreme. The excessive importance given to the making of the picture influenced the picture's direct revelation of mood. In this way their artistic path got narrower the further they went. This defect was not too much of an impediment to them (because of their constant hard work, assiduousness, ability and intelligence), but has become greatly aggravated in their pupils. It can be said that Pan Tianshou and Li Keran's contributions to Chinese painting mostly had a negative influence. Fu Baoshi was also somewhat similar. Fu Baoshi's paintings were very original. His understanding of tradition was unusual. His greatest characteristic was his attention to life impressions, so that looking at his painting, what comes across is a dense flavour of life. However, he leaned too far towards a naturalist style. Among contemporary famous Chinese painters, he was the painter who least used traditional methods to paint; at the same time as he rebelled against tradition, he also conformed to the conventional pattern of putting new wine into old bottles. Artists who were influenced by Fu Baoshi not only lost the vitality in their teacher's paintings, but rigidly fixed Fu Baoshi's unfinished artistic explorations into a standardised formula.

Of course Pan Tianshou, Li Keran and Fu Baoshi's explorations in painting are all worth paying attention to. But painters such as Li Kuchan and Huang Zhou are far inferior. Actually Li Kuchan's works are the epitome of knocking something together. He did not try to fundamentally understand the spirit of traditional Chinese painting, but abstracted strengths (or even weaknesses) of certain techniques of older/preceding artists, and moved them, practically untouched, into his own paintings. His adeptness at brushwork techniques did not raise his art any higher, but instead lost personal character. Huang Zhou and Cheng Shifa's works are repetitions of stereotypes. Their early works still show a radiance of talent, having the untrammelled fervour of youthful artists. Yet they quickly ground to a halt, roughness and slipshodness being their main shortcoming. This also shows that their understanding of art was insufficient. Many figure painters who are like Huang Zhou and

Cheng Shifa cannot avoid their mistake. The figure paintings they have made have already become ink games with the sole purpose of giving reign to the peculiarities of brush and ink.

Surveying contemporary Chinese art circles, we cannot discover among the multitudinous famous artists the leaders of the movement of artistic innovation which is just unfolding before us. What this age needs is not just that kind of artist who is able to give continuity to cultural tradition, but artists who can produce epoch-making contributions. We should try to create such an atmosphere: to make every artist, on the basis of being able to freely explore, forsake strict technical norms and rigidified aesthetic criteria, to create rich and different artistic forms. There is no need to worry, genuine artists living in modern China cannot become 'completely Westernised' nor cling relentlessly to 'national essence'. The customs of national life and the modern concept of opening up internationally will bring Chinese contemporary painting infinitely broad prospects. Boldness, courage and strength is a basic requirement for those aspiring to initiate the new phase of contemporary Chinese painting. We will end this article with a saying of Epicurus: "Those who agree with everyone's gods are not necessarily sincere, those who don't agree with everyone's gods are not necessarily insincere."

6. Gu Wenda

Encircled by a wall within infinite space, to us this wall takes on a definite nature. That simple limited shape within the surrounding wall is as clearly understood. However, our thought cannot be forever satisfied in being hemmed in within this simple shape. We may feel that there exists another infinite and complex universe outside the wall, there, is an infinite indeterminance. As a result, concepts conveyed within the wall can no longer be pure and succinct, because the unknown world outside the wall and the known world within the wall co-exist. The art picture is just that wall which hems us in. The complex concepts its simplicity conveys is the infinite world beyond the wall. The simplicity of the art picture is the relative simplicity of human knowledge in relation to the infinite universe; the concepts art pictures convey is that infinite universe of our ignorance. Hence we can clearly see the

expressive form of art pictures, but have no way of expressing the conceptual world they convey. We have mastered the formal world but are perplexed at their conceptual world.

Appendix II: Exhibitions and Conferences

(20/10-20/11/1977) South West Minority Arts Exhibition - National Art Museum

(18-22/12/1978) 3rd Plenum of the CCP

(Spring 1979) New Spring quasi-offical exhibition

(Sept 1979) Stars Unofficial Exhibition

(October 1979) First BOPRA Exhibition

(23/11-02/12/1979) First Official Stars Exhibition. Beihai Park.

(December 1979) Exhibtion to Commemorate the Martyr Zhang Zhixin - National Art Museum

(10/02 - 10/03/1980) "30 Years Since the Founding of State" Commemorative Exhibition - National Art Museum

(30/07-17/08/1980) Monkey Group Exhibition (Yunnan)

(20/08-07/09/1980) Second Stars Exhibition - National Art Museum

(15/11-30/11/1980) 3rd BOPRA Exhibition - National Art Museum.
(no dates given) BOPRA Conference (Zhan Jianjun). Beijing

(21/12/1980-22/02/1981) Second National Youth Exhibition - National Art Museum

(April 1981) Conference on the Nationalisation of Oil Painting. Shanghai

(29/08-13/09/1981) Yunnan 10 Exhibition - National Art Museum

(01/01- 28/02/1982). First All-China National Minorities Exhibition - Beijing Nationalities Cultural Palace

(20/01-07/02/1982 Sichuan Oil Painting Exhibition - National Art Museum

(27/07/-11/08/1983) 8th National Print Exhibition

(June 1984) Second Sichuan Art Academy Exhibition: Beijing

(01-31/10/1984) 6th National Art Exhibition: Beijing, Nanjing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Xian, Shenyang, Guangzhou, Changsha

(October 1984) Conference on How to Develop Chinese Painting. Nanjing.

(11/12/1984-10/01/1985) 6th National Art Exhibition Prize-winning Works. National Art Museum

(April 1985) Oil Painting Art Conference (known as the Huangshan Conference). Jingxian, Anhui.

(11-26/05/1985) Advancing Young Chinese Artists Exhibition

(06-11/05/1985) Chinese Artists Association 4th Representative Meeting, Jinan

(June and July 1985) New Figurative Painting Exhibition: Shanghai, then Nanjing.

(July 1985) Zhejiang Academy of Art 1985 Graduation Exhibition
 (13-26/10/1985) Ban Zaizi Exhibition
 (15-25/10/1985) Jiangsu Large-scale Youth Exhibition.
 (November 1985) November Exhibition: Gugong, Beijing
 (02/12/1985) 1985 New Space Exhibition. ZAFA
 (May/June 1986) "70% Red, 25% Black, 5% White Exhibition". ZAFA
 (June 1986) Gu Wenda's First One Man Show. Xi'an
 (July 1986) Chinese Art Under the Impact of Western Culture. Theory Conference, Yantai
 (15-19/08/1986) Zhuhai Slide Exhibition and Conference
 (07/09-05/10/1986) Shai Taiyang (Sunbathing) Exhibition. Nanjing
 (28/09-05/10/1986) Xiamen 1986 Dada Modern Art Exhibition.
 (26/10/1986) South-west Art Research Group "New Figurative Exhibition". Yunnan.
 (23/12/1986) Concept 21 Action Art - Beijing University.
 (10-20/12/1987) Towards the Future Exhibition. National Art Museum
 (21/12/1987-09/01/1988) First National Oil Painting Exhibition. Shanghai.
 (13/02/1988) Conference on "pseudo" Classicism and "pseudo" Modernism
 (10-11/05/1988) Concept 21 Performance. Great Wall.
 (September 1988) Wen Pulin "The Great Earthquake" filmed on the Great Wall.
 (October 1988) South West Art Exhibition. Chengdu.
 (October 1988) Lu Shengzhong and Xu Bing Exhibition
 (22-24/11/1988) Chinese Modern Art Creation Conference. Huangshan
 (22/12/1988-08/01/1989) Nude Oil Painting Exhibition.
 (05/19/02/1989) China Modern Art Exhibition. National Art Museum.
 (11/02/1989) My Opinions on Art Conference. CAFA
 (13/02/1989) Modern Chinese Art Conference
 (11-17/04/1989) New Literati Painting Exhibition. National Art Museum.
 (05/09-05/10/1989) 7th National Art Exhibition

Appendix III: Artists Biographies (& names in Chinese)

This series of short biographies is arranged according to date of birth to give an idea of the generational relation between artists. When the information about date of birth is incomplete, the artists are listed below the most relevant date and arranged according to alphabetical order. Artists about whom there is no information are listed at the end of the appendix together with the characters for their name. The content of the biographies has been edited to give relatively equal attention to each artist. Therefore the information about well-known artists has been reduced to the essential, whereas that of the lesser known artists has been somewhat expanded. The main sources of the information are as follows

Boorman *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* University of Columbia 1967 (abbreviated to (Boorman))

Zhongguo meishu nianjian 1949-1989 Guangxi Meishu Chubanshe 1991 (abbreviated to NJ).

Zhongguoenminglu dangdai yishujia renminglu Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe (abbreviated to RML).

Liao Wen *Zhongguo dalu zhongqingdai meishujia bairenzhuan* Taiwan 1992. (abbreviated to BRZ).
Sullivan, M. *Art and Artists of 20th Century China* Univ. of California 1996. (abbreviated to Sullivan 1996)

Other sources have been listed in full. The author has occasionally also added some information from his own research.

1840-1899

Ren Bonian (1840-1885) Born in Xiaoshan county, Zhejiang province. From a poor background he became one of the most well-known *guohua* figure painters of his age.

任伯年

Soong, James Han-hsi *A Visual Experience in Nineteenth Century China. Jen Po-nien (1840-1985) and the Shanghai School of Painting* Stanford University PhD 1978

Wu Changshuo (1844-1927) From Zhejiang. *Guohua* painter, seal-engraver, calligrapher and poet. Important painter of the Shanghai school. (Sullivan 1996:317)

吴昌硕

Qi Baishi (1864-1957) The most famous traditional *guohua* painter of this century, his fate paralleled that of the rise of the Communist Party. Born to a poor peasant family, Qi Baishi first became an apprentice carpenter and woodcarver. Eventually he learnt *guohua* and developed his own unique style and imagery. His paintings and poems were closely tied to his personal experience and his roots in the countryside. With the Communists' rise to power Qi Baishi became the symbol of a peasant artist who had mastered the literati tradition while retaining his identity as a peasant.

齐白石

Jung Ying Tsao *The Paintings of Xu Gu and Qi Baishi* University of Washington Press 1993

Huang Binhong (1865-1955) Considered one of the four traditional masters of the 20th century. From Zhejiang.

黄宾虹

Calligrapher art historian traditional painter active in Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing, after 1948 taught at the National Academy of Art, Hangzhou (Sullivan 1996:304)

Cai Yuanpei (1867-1940) Served as the first minister of education of the Republic (1912-1913), chancellor of

蔡元培

National Beijing University (1917-1927), and co-founder and director of the Academia Sinica, the highest research institute of Nationalist China. Through his early campaign for freedom in education, the May the Fourth Movement of 1919 was fostered and the 'new tide' of thought was largely made possible. Many eminent political and academic leaders of the past generation in China were trained at Beida under his influence. He became well versed in Western philosophy, and in 1912, after resigning from the first Republican cabinet, he went to Europe to study world civilisations. He wrote a book dealing with the principles of

philosophy while he was in France during the first world war and another volume on the history of aesthetics (Teng & Fairbank 1954:234)

Li Tiefu (1869-06/1952) From Guangdong. Generally acknowledged as the first student to study oil painting abroad, having gone to England in 1887. Later lived in the USA. Practised oil painting, watercolour, *guohua* and sculpture. His oil paintings, mostly subdued portraits are of a high standard. Li's influence, however was limited as he only returned to China in 1930. (NJ 221)

李铁夫

Zhou Xiang (1871-1933) Visited Japan and the US and in 1911 set up the first art college in China where he taught by copying pictures from magazines.

周湘

Chen Shizeng (1876-1924) From Xiushui, Jiangxi. *Guohua* painter and critic. Studied in Japan. On his return taught in Beijing College of Art and Higher Normal College. Patron of Qi Baishi. (Sullivan, 1996:299)

陈师曾

Gao Jianfu (12/10/1879-22/06/1951) Born in Panyu, Guangdong. Student of the traditional painter Ju Lian (1828-1904), he was one of the earliest reformers of *guohua* painting. 1895 studied Western painting under a French artist at Canton Christian College, the predecessor of Lingnan University. 1898 went to Japan where he studied Japanese painting techniques and joined such organisations as the White Horse Society, the Pacific Painting Society and the Watercolour Study Association. 1904 returned to Japan to study at the Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts. Joined the Tongmenghui. After 1911 established a publishing house in Shanghai and produced *The True Record*, the first photographic magazine to be published in China. 1929 directed China's first National art exhibition in Nanjing. In the thirties he taught at the National Sun Yatsen University and headed the Municipal Academy of Fine Arts in Guangdong. 1935 took a leave of absence to teach at the National Central University, Nanjing, where he founded the Yafengshe (Asian Wind Society). (Boorman 235-237, Croizier *Art and Revolution in Modern China* University of California 1988)

高剑父

Li Shutong (1880-1942) Born in Tianjin. Influential art educator in the early century. Studied Confucian classics and Buddhist texts in his youth, as well as painting and seal carving. 1897 became a partisan of Kang Youwei's reform faction and had to flee to Shanghai after the empress dowager's coup d'état. In Shanghai he spent six years at Xu Huan Yuan villa painting and practising the art of Chinese poetry. Helped form the Shanghai Association for Calligraphy and Painting, which published the weekly Bulletin of Calligraphy and Painting. 1902 studied for a time at Nanyang University Nanjing where he was a student of Cai Yuanpei. 1905 went to Japan to study western art at the Ueno Academy of Art and music at the Academy of Music. Organised the Spring Willow Drama Club with Ouyang Yuqian. 1910 returned to China and taught drawing at the Zhili Academy of Applied Arts. 1918 took his first vows of entrance into the Buddhist clergy and adopted the name Hongyi. (Boorman 323-329)

李叔同

Chen Shuren (04/1883-04/10/1948) From Panyu, Guangdong. *Guohua* painter and exponent of the Lingnan School. Came from an affluent literary family and was a favourite pupil of Ju Lian (1828-1904). 1911 went to Japan where he studied at Rikkyo University, remaining until 1916. Chen also became involved in anti-Manchu revolutionary activities, and from 1916-1922 became director of party affairs in Canada and the US. 1923 became director of the general affairs department of the Guomindang. He held various posts in the Guangdong provincial government until 1927. From 1932 to 1948 he was head of the Guomindang's overseas Chinese affairs commission. (Boorman 234, Croizier *Art and Revolution in Modern China* University of California 1988)

陈树人

Li Yishi (1886-1942) From Jiangsu. Studied in Japan and Scotland. 1916 teacher in Beijing Univ. school of engineering. 1922 One of the founders of the Apollo Society. Taught in Chongqing (Sullivan 1996:308).

李毅士

Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962) From Liuyang, Hunan. 1901 moved to Beijing, and in 1903 went to study in Japan. 1907 returned to Shanghai where he was one of the pioneers of new theatre. (*Minguo Renwu Dacidian* Hubei Renmin Chubanshe 1991:1385)

欧阳予倩

Gao Qifeng (03/07/1889-02/11/1935) Born in Panyu, Guangdong. Younger brother of Gao Jianfu (1879-1951), student of Ju Lian and exponent of the Lingnan school. 1905-1911 spent in Japan studying Western art. After 1911 helped his brother with his enterprises in Shanghai. 1918 went to Guangzhou where he taught drawing at the Guangdong Institute of Technology and established the Meixueguan, which later became the Tianfeng Academy of Art. 1925 taught Chinese art at Lingnan University. 1929 built the Tianfenglou, a studio where he led a quiet life teaching. (Boorman 237-238, Croizier *Art and Revolution in Modern China* University of California 1988)

Fu Yanchang (1891-1961) From Ningxian, Hunan. Studied in Japan during the April 4th Movement. Contributed articles to *Xin Qingnian* and other publications. (*Zhongguo JinXi'andai Renwu Minghao Dacidian*. Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe 1993:886)

Xu Beihong (19/07/1895 - 26/09/1953) From Yixing, Jiangsu province. Paris-trained oil painter who tried to reform *guohua* by using Western realist techniques. From a modest background (his father was a schoolmaster and craftsman) he began to paint at an early age. 1914 went to Shanghai. 1917 spent nine months studying in Japan. Afterwards, he secured a teaching post at the art department of Beijing Normal College. 1919 awarded a scholarship to go to France where he studied at the Academie Julien followed by the Ecole Des Beaux Arts, and later also in Berlin. 1927 returned to China and was appointed professor of the art department of the National Central University, Nanjing. Also became head of the art section of the Nanguo Academy of Fine Arts, Nanjing. 1929 was appointed head of the department of Fine Arts at Beijing University, but then resigned and resumed direction of the department at Nanjing. Moved with his college to Chongqing when the anti-Japanese war started. 1942 returned to Chongqing after a tour of South-East Asia and became director of the National Art Research Institute founded by the Academia Sinica. Returned to Beijing as director of the CAFA retaining his post until his death in 1953. He was also elected chairman of the CAA and a delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. (Boorman 134-135.NJ:234.*Meishu Yanjiu* 4/1980)

Liu Haisu (16/03/1896-1994) From Jiangsu. Practised *guohua*, oil painting, poetry and calligraphy. Began learning Western painting with Zhou Xiang but soon started experimenting on his own. Set up the Shanghai Meizhuan in 1912 becoming one of the highly influential early art educators. 1981-19 Studied in Japan. 1929-1931 Studied in Europe. A very charismatic figure Liu held several important teaching posts. His college was involved in an early controversy because of his advocacy of drawing from live nude models. His oil paintings and *guohua* are remarkable for their bright colouring reminiscent of the Fauves. (NJ:236)

Pan Tianshou (14/03/1897-05/09/1971) From Ninghai, Zhejiang. *Guohua* painter and calligrapher. Taught in the West Lake Art Academy in Hangzhou since 1928. After 1949 was vice chairman of the Chinese Artists Association. 1944-47 president of the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Art. (Yang Siliang *Pan Tianshou and Traditional Chinese Painting* University of Kansas PhD 1995.NJ:238)

Lü Wei (1896-1989) From Danyang, Jiangsu province. The younger brother of Lü Fengzi. Studied economics in Nanjing. Later he made the acquaintance of Ouyang Jingwu and started learning about Buddhism. 1914 entered the Buddhism Research Bureau, then went to study art in Japan. Returned to China in 1916 when he became Dean of Studies of the Shanghai Meizhuan. 1918 helped Ouyang to set up the Zhina Nei Xueyuan. 1922, became dean of the academy and continued his research on Buddhism. After 1949 he was made a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. (*Zhongguo Jinxiandai Renwu Minghao Dacidian*. Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe 1993:147)

Feng Zikai (09/11/1898-15/09/1975) From Chongde, Zhejiang Province. Best known for his ink-wash cartoons. One of ten children. His father died when he was a child, and he was brought up by his mother. Enrolled in the First Normal School, Hangzhou where he studied under Li Shutong. 1918 left Hangzhou for Shanghai and helped found the Yishu Daxue (Shanghai College of Art) a school to train teachers of art and music. 1921 went to study at the Hashikawa School of Western Painting in Japan. Also studied Japanese, English and violin. 1926 became art

tutor at Shanghai University and joined the editorial staff of the Kaiming book company, which published his History of Western art in 1928. (Harbsmeier. Boorman 28-30, NJ:241)

Pan Yuliang (1899-1977) Woman artist, born in Yangzhou. Sold to a brothel after her parents death, when she was 14. Married Pan Chanhua. Studied at the Shanghai Art Academy between 1910 and 1921. Won a scholarship to study in France, first at the Lyon Art Academy and then at the Paris Art Academy with Lucien Simon. 1925 went to study at the Rome Academy of Art where she met Liu Haisu. Returned to China when she had finished her studies and taught at the Shanghai Art Academy and later at the art department of Central University, Nanjing. She returned to France in 1938 where she continued to work as an artist. (*Seven Chinese Painters Who Studied in France Between 1918 and 1960.*)

潘玉良

Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) From Neijiang, Sichuan. *Guohua* painter, collector and forger. 1917 studied textiles in Japan. 1919 returned to Shanghai. 1927 started to travel widely in China. 1936 taught at the National Central University, Nanjing. 1941-1943 copied murals in Dunhuang 1948 left China, lived and worked in countries all over the world, finally settling in Taiwan. (Sullivan 1996:322. Shen C.Y.Fu and Jan Stewart *Challenging the Past. The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien* University of Washington Press 1991)

张大千

1900-1909

Zhang Guangyu (08/1900-05/1965). From Wuxi, Jiangsu Province 1818 studied scene painting in Shanghai. 1930s worked as an illustrator at tobacco companies and helped edit *Sanre Huabao*, *Shanghai Manhua*, *Wan Xiang*. 1940s worked in several film companies and headed the Renjian Huahui in Hong Kong. During the 50s taught at the Central Academy and Central Academy of Arts and Crafts (NJ:246)

张光宇

Lin Fengmian (22/11/1900-1991). One of the most important educators of Republican China. Mainly trained as an oil painter, Lin was also one of the early pioneers in reforming *guohua*. Born in Guangdong. Learnt stone masonry from his grandfather, copied the *Mustard Seed Manual of Painting* under the supervision of his father, and learnt life sketching from his middle school teacher. 1919 went to France on a part-work part study programme. Studied at the Dijon Art Academy of Fine Arts, then Paris Art Academy, studio of Cormon. 1925 returned to China and was appointed director of the Beiping National Art Academy. 1928 went to Hangzhou at the invitation of Cai Yuanpei to found the West Lake Academy of Fine Arts (later the National Hangzhou Arts Academy). With the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, he followed the Academy to the interior of China, and in 1938 became director of the National Arts Academy, Chongqing. After the war, returned to the National Hangzhou Arts Academy where he taught in the oil painting department. 1951 moved to Shanghai where he became a painter at the Shanghai Guohuayuan. 1960 appointed chairman of the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Artists Association. (NJ:247. *Lin Fengmian* Xuelin Chubanshi, Shanghai 1988. *Meishu Shilun* 2/1990)

林风眠

Guan Liang (30/12/1900-28/11/1986). Oil painter who turned to *guohua* and became famous for his paintings of traditional opera. Born in Guangdong. 1917 studied in Japan. 1923 graduated from the Pacific Art Academy, Tokyo, returning to China the same year. Taught successively at the Shanghai Art Academy, Guangzhou Shili Meishuxuexiao, Chongqing National Arts Academy, National Hangzhou Arts Academy. Moved with the Art College to Chongqing during the war. (NJ:247)

关良

Wu Fuzhi (1900-1977). From Pujiang, Zhejiang Province. *Guohua* painter. 23 years old, entered Shanghai Meishuzhuanke xuexiao. Learnt *guohua* painting in the style of Wu Changshuo. Taught at the Shanghai Meizhuan, Guoli Yizhuan and Zhejiang Academy of Art where he became head of *guohua* dept. (NJ:248)

吴笈之

Chang Yu (b.1900) 1918 went to study in France where he remained. *Seven Chinese Painters Who Studied in France Between 1918 and 1960.*

常玉

Ni Yide (1901-1970) From Hangzhou. 1922 graduated from Shanghai Art Academy, remaining as a research student. 1927 studied in Japan. 1928 returned to China. 1932 became a teacher at the Shanghai Art Academy. He was also an important founding member of the Storm Society. 1938 went to Wuhan to join the anti Japanese resistance movement. 1950 taught oil painting at the Eastern Campus of the Central Academy of Art, Hangzhou. 1961, the Zhejiang Academy of Art set up the Ni Yide studio workroom. (NJ:25. *Meishu Shilun* 3/1990/Ni Yide *Huaji* Zhejiang Meishu Xueyuan Chubanshi 1991. *Ni Yide Yishu Lunji* Zhejiang Meishu Xueyuan Chubanshi 1993)

倪貽德

Zhu Leshan (02/1902-01/1984). *Guohua* painter, calligrapher and seal carver. From Anji, Zhejiang. 19 years old studied painting with his uncle Wu Changshuo. From 1923 taught at Shanghai Meizhuan, Xinhua Yizhuan, Changming Yizhuan, Shanghai Zhonghua Yishu Daxue and Zhejiang Academy of Art (NJ:253)

朱乐三

Situ Qiao (09/11/1902- 16/02/1958) From Kaiping, Guangdong. 1928 went to study in France. 1930 to the U.S. where he earned a living painting murals. On his return, taught at Lingnan University. 1934-36 art editor of the *Dagongbao*. 1938 went to Burma, then to Singapore in 1939 to cure an illness. 1942 returned to Chongqing. Went to the U.S to cure his illness, returning in 1950. 1952 taught at the CAFA (NJ:255)

司徒大

Xu Xinzhi (04/05/1904-) From Yangzhou, Jiangsu. 1919 entered the Shanghai Art Academy. 1923. entered Shanghai Eastern Art Research Institute for further studies. 1924 studied at the Tokyo Art Xuexiao, Japan. Returned in 1929, became head of oil painting at the Shanghai Zhonghua Art University. Joined League of Left wing artists, for which he was chosen to become the first chairman. 1935 art designer for the Tianyi film studio. After 1940 taught at the Luxun Academy of Art, Zhongshan Univ. and CAFA. (NJ:262.*Meishu* 3/1990.3/1992)

许辛之

Jiang Zhaohe (09/05/1904- 15/04/1906) From Luzhou, Sichuan. Learnt to read and write with his father, and had a basis for traditional painting. Because his family was poor he went to Shanghai to seek a living, painting posters, making clothes designs and teaching himself painting. 1927 met Xu Beihong and was appointed to a teaching post in Nanjing Central University. 1930 to 1932 taught sketching at the Shanghai Art Academy. Participated in the Temporary Youth Patriotic Propaganda team, painting anti-Japanese posters. Lost his job. 1935 went to Beijing. (NJ:263. *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1981)

蒋兆和

Gu Kenbo (1905-1979).From Jiangsu, Wuxi. *Guohua shanshui* painter. 1923 admitted to the Shanghai Art Academy. 1957 began teaching at the Zhejiang Academy of Art.(NJ:270)

顾坤伯

Pang Xunqin (20/06/1906-01/03/1985). One of the early adherents to the modernist movement in China. From Changshu, Jiangsu. 1925-1930 studied in France. Member of the Storm Society. Worked in a wide variety of styles. 1949 taught in Central Academy East Campus, Hangzhou. 1953 taught in the CAFA. 1956-85 vice-president of CAAC. (NJ:272)

庞薰琹

Pan Yun (06/1906-06/1985) From Changxing, Zhejiang. *Guohua* painter. 1934 graduated from Shanghai Xinhua Yizhuan where he taught. 1940 went to the ZAFa. 1957 was condemned as a rightist, his case was reversed in the 70s and in 1982 he went to work in the Zhejiang Wenshiguan (NJ:275)

潘韵

Deng Bai (03/09/1906-) *Guohua* painter. Graduated from the art department of Central University. Taught at the ZAFa. (NJ:273)

邓白

Zhao Wangyun (09/1906-29/03/1977) Born in Shuli, Hebei Province. 1925-1927 studied at the Jinghua Meishu Zhuanke Xuexiao and the National Beiping Zhuanke Xuexiao. Painted life sketches of the countryside published in the *Dagongbao*. Became one of the early models for reforming *guohua* through painting from life. One of the main members of the Xi'an school of painting. (NJ:273. *Cong Xuetu Dao Dashi*, *Huajia Zhao Wangyun* Shaanxi Renmin Chubanshe 1992)

赵望云

Li Hua (06/03/1907-1994) Best known as a woodcut artist. He graduated from the Guangzhou Shili Meishu Xuexiao.1930 studied in Japan. 1932 returned to teach at his old college. 1934 organised the

李华

modern print society in Guangzhou and edited the magazine *Xiandai Banhua*. 1938 took the post of director of the Chinese Woodcut Resistance Society. 1947 taught at the National Beiping Arts College. He has taught at the CAFA since 1950 when he was made head of the Print Department. (NJ:276. *Banhua Yishu* no13 (3/1984), *Meishu Yanjiu* 3/1980, and 4/1983)

Li Keran (26/03/1907-05/12/1989) Born in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province. Learnt both Western and traditional painting and was one of the most prominent and successful reformers of *guohua* in the post-49 period. Son of a poor peasant, Li first studied with a local teacher and later at the Shanghai Academy and the West Lake National Academy of Arts. His connection with the left-wing "18 Art Society" forced him to leave the former institution and in 1932 he returned to Xuzhou and taught at the Xuzhou Private School. There, he helped found the Black and White Print Society and held his first solo exhibition. Took part in the Second All China art exhibition in Nanjing. 1935 visited Taishan and went to Beijing to study ancient paintings in the Imperial Palace. 1938 began to paint posters for the resistance and the following year he made his way to Chongqing where he later taught at the Chongqing National Art School. 1945 held a joint exhibition with the more modernist artists Lin Fengmian, Ding Yanyong, Guan Liang, Zhao Wuji and Ni Yide. 1946 taught at Beiping Art School. 1947 became a student of Qi Baishi and Huang Binhong. 1950 Central Academy was established and Li became associate professor. 1954 went on a sketching trip with Zhang Ding and Luo Ming, followed by another one in 1979. Became vice-chairman of the Chinese Artists Association. (Wan Qingli *Li Keran (1907-1989) and Twentieth Century Chinese Painting*. PhD. University of Kansas 1991. *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1979.)

Ye Qianyu (31/03/1907-) From Zhejiang. 1929 began drawing cartoons. 1936 held the first National Cartoon exhibition, and helped establish the All-China Assoc. of Cartoonists for National Salvation. 1942 went sketching to the Miao regions of Guizhou and began *guohua* figure painting. 1947 began teaching at the Beiping Yizhuan. 1954 became head of the *guohua* department of the Central Academy. (NJ:277)

Wu Zuoren (03/11/1908) From Suzhou, Jiangsu province, his ancestral home was in Jingxian county, Anhui. 1927 admitted into the fine art dept of the Shanghai Academy of Art. Joined the South China Art Society organised by Tian, Han Ouyang Yuqian and Xu Beihong. Entered the South China Art College fine art department directed by Xu Beihong. 1930 went to Paris, admitted to professor Simon's atelier in L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Went to Brussels and was admitted to Alfred Bastien's atelier in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts where he was awarded a gold award in an oil painting exam entitling him to a studio and a scholarship. 1935 invited by Xu Beihong to return to China to lecture at the art department of Central University. 1938 joined war artists from the Central University and went to the Huangchuan Shangqiu sector to sketch and gather materials from the front. 1940s took up *guohua*. 1946 went to Beiping to take over the Beiping Art College, becoming dean as well as professor of oil painting. Organised the association of Beiping artists of which he was president. *Life and works of Wu Zuoren, Contemporary Chinese Artists Series*. Sichuan Art Publishing House 1989 *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1982

Huang Zhen (b.1908) From Anhui. Graduated from the Shanghai Art Academy and joined the CCP. In 1934 he commanded the 13th regiment of the 3rd front under Peng Dehuai. After crossing the Jinsha river during the Long March he wrote the plays "A Broken Sandal" and "March Forward with Force". Painted a series of documentary sketches recording the long march. 1937 functioned primarily as a political officer in various units in North China. With the rank of major-general he headed the 1946 negotiations between the CCP and Guomindang in Beijing where he was imprisoned by the latter for one year. 1947 served as a political commissar in the Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan Field Army. After 1950 held various important posts as ambassador to different countries. From Dec 1977 to Sept 1979 he was minister of culture and deputy director of the propaganda dept of the CCP Central Committee. 1978 elected member of the standing committee of the 5th CCP. Became director of the Propaganda department the following year, a post he held until 1982. (*Who's Who in the People's Republic of China* New York 1981:135)

Lu Yanshao (26/06/1909-1993). From Jiading, Shanghai. 1926 graduated from the the Wuxi Meizhuan ,
 陆伊少 beginning to study *guohua* with Feng Chaoran the following year. Went to Chongqing during the War of Resistance. 1956 became a painter at the Shanghai Huayuan. 1957 condemned as a rightist. 1962 began teaching *shanshui* at the Zhejiang Academy of Art. (NJ:289 *Meishu Yanjiu* 1/1981)

Shen Shuyang (06/09/1909-11/1986) From Jiaxing, Zhejiang. 1930 graduated from the oil painting department of the Shanghai Zhuanmen Xuexiao. 1935 went to study in Japan. Took up *guohua*, and in the fifties taught *guohua* in the CAFA (NJ:290)
 沈叔羊

1910-1919

Cai Ruohong (29/01/1910) Cartoonist. From Jiujiang, Jiangxi. 1931 graduated from the Shanghai Meizhuan Western art dept. and joined the League of Left Wing artists. 1933 started making satirical drawings. 1938 left Shanghai for Yan'an where he taught at the Lu Xun Art Academy. 1942 present at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art. 1945 went with the Lu Xun Art Academy to the liberated areas of North China. Later appointed vice-chairman of the CAA (NJ:293)
 蔡若虹

Jiang Feng (02/1910-13/09/1982). Woodcut artist who played an important part in reforming the Chinese art world after 1949. From Shanghai. Born to a poor working class family. 1927 took part in the strikes organised by the Labour Society. 1929 after work, would go to learn painting at the White Goose Preparatory Painting School. 1931 took part in the Shanghai left-wing art activities, prepared to establish the Eighteen Art Society research studio, and took part in the Lu Xun print classes. 1936 organised the Steel Horse printing society and the Shanghai Woodcut printers Society. 1938 went to Yan'an. 1951 became Vice-director of the Central Academy, taking over as director after Xu Beihong's death. 1957 condemned as a rightist. Reinstated in the late seventies. (NJ:294. *Banhua Yishu* 9 (3/1983) Andrews 1994:12-27)
 江丰

Feng Jianwu (23/03/1910) From Sichuan. 1926-1929 studied at Sichuan Meizhuan, Zhonghua Art University, graduating from Changming Yizhuan. 1932 head of the *guohua* dept. of Dongfang Meizhuan, becoming vice president and later president. 1952 edited Xibei Huabao in Xi'an. 1956 taught at Sichuan Meixiao, retiring in 1987. Vice chairman of the CAA Sichuan branch. Vice chairman of Chongqing Guohuayuan. (NJ:296)
 冯建吴

Wang Chaowen (08/04/1910) From Hejiang, Sichuan Province. Sculptor and art theorist. Studied in the National Academy of Art, Hangzhou in thirties. Joined anti-Japanese propaganda team. 1940 went to Yan'an, taught in the Lu Xun Academy of Art. After 1949 taught at the CAFA. General editor of *Meishu*, vice-president of the CAA. (Sullivan 1996:314. NJ:288)
 王朝闻

Li Qun (25/12/1912-) Woodcut Artist. From Lingshi, Shanxi. 1931 admitted to the Hangzhou National Arts Academy. 1933 set up the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society and began to study woodcut. Joined the League of Left Wing Artists the same year. Set up the Shanghai Woodcut Workers Association together with Jiang Feng. 1940 went to Yan'an where he taught at the Lu Xun Academy of Art. 1942 present at the Yan'an talks. 1949 attended the First National Cultural Representatives. Afterwards worked in the Taiyuan Shanxi Literary Association. 1952 assigned to Beijing and was assistant editor of *Meishu* and *Banhua*. 1977 vice chairman of the Shanxi Literary Association and head of the Huayuan. Vice Chairman of the Print Artists Association. (NJ:314)
 力群

Luo Ming (b.1912) From Guangdong. *Guohua* painter with the Xi'an Academy. (Sullivan 1996:310)

Zhu Jinlou (11/1913) From Shanghai. Graduate of the Shanghai Meizhuan. Set up and edited *Chinese Cartoons* monthly. Involved in anti-Japanese propaganda. 1948 PLA cultural work. 1950 ZAFa where he headed the *caimohua* dept. (NJ:323)
 朱金楼

Chen Zizhuang (1913-1976) From Yongchuan, Sichuan. *Guohua* painter. Peasant background, later considered to be in the "small-scale local landlord" category. Rose to semi-artisan status in his teens and became an itinerant painter. Hired as a bodyguard to the warlord Wang Zanzu, and was able
 陈子庄

to study his painting collection. Came into trouble after 1949 because of his background. Very highly thought of in the eighties. (Silbergeld, J and Gong Jisui *Contradictions: Artistic Life, the Socialist State and the Chinese Artist Li Huasheng*. Univ of Washington 1993)

Dong Xiwen (27/06/1914 - 01/08/1973) From Shaoxing, Zhejiang province. 1932 admitted to Hangzhou Zhejiang University graphics department, entering the Suzhou Art Academy the following year. 1934 did a foundation course at the Hangzhou Zhuanke Xuexiao, carrying on to a BA. 1939 went to study in Hanoi, Vietnam, where he stayed for six months. 1942 went to Chongqing, and then to Dunhuang the following year where he copied murals. 1946 started teaching in the Beiping National Art Academy and stayed on when it became the Central Academy. 1949 took part in the China National Literature and Art Representative Plenum. 1952 to 53 headed the organisation which drafts memorial relief statues of heroes of the people. 1953 painted The Foundation of State. In 1962 the Dong Xiwen studio was set up at the CAFA. In 1972 he fell ill and died the following year. (NJ:329. Also *Meishu Yanjiu* 2/1958 and 4/1989)

Huang Jun (b.1914) From Beijing. 1928 entered the Chinese Painting Research Society, learning painting from Xu Yansu and Chen Shaomei then followed Liu Lingcan to learn figure painting. 1944, after graduation became assistant teacher and turned to *shanshui*, poetry and calligraphy. After 1949 taught at the CAFA (NJ:329)

Zhuang Yan (01/01/1915) From Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province. Studied at Shanghai Meizhuan. Editor of *Defend Yan'an*. Member of the BOPRA (NJ:335)

Hua Junwu (04/1915) From Wuxi, Jiangsu. Started having his cartoons published in 1934 while still at middle school. 1936 studied at Shanghai Datong University. 1938 went to Yan'an where he taught at the Lu Xun Art Academy. 1945 worked in the North East liberated areas where he was reporter for the *North East Daily* at which time he also published cartoons. 1949 assigned to the *People's Daily*. 1953 became head secretary of the CAA. Later chairman of the CAA (NJ:337)

Liu Xian (07/07/1915) Woodcut artist. From Lankao Henan Province. 1930 went to Beiping and started making woodcuts. 1934-1937 studied oil painting and woodcut printing in Tokyo. Returned to China, then taught at the Lu Xun Academy of Art. 1982 director of the research dept. of National Art Museum (Sullivan 1996:309.NJ:339)

Liao Bingxiong (21/10/1915) From Guangdong. 1932 began publishing cartoons. 1935 graduated from Guangzhou Shifan Xuexiao. 1938 joined a cartoon propaganda team. 1939 propaganda teacher at Guangxi cadre school. 1947 joined the *Renjian Huahui* in Hong Kong. Worked at the Guangzhou Literary Association. 1956 vice-chairman of the Guangzhou CAA. Participated in the 6NAE. (NJ:342)

Ai Zhongxin (b.10/1915) From Shanghai. 1925 began learning ink-wash painting. From 1927 studied at the Shanghai Nanyang middle school, Shanghai Datong University and began to have his cartoons published. 1937 entered the Nanjing Central University to study art. 1940 graduated and remained as a teacher. 1944 went to sketch at the anti-Japanese battle front in Hunan. 1946 taught at the Beiping Guoli Yizhuan. 1950 became head of the oil painting department and vice-director of the Academy. Participated in the 2nd NAE. Red Army Crosses the Snow Mountains in the Museum of Revolutionary History, Crossing the Yellow River at Night in the Museum of the Revolution. (NJ:342.RML:14)

Huang Xinbo (1915-07/03/1980) From Taishan county, Guangdong. Was expelled from middle school for writing revolutionary essays. 1933 went to Shanghai where he joined the League of Left-wing Artists and a communist youth group. Involved in the woodcut movement being in personal contact with Lu Xun, with whose financial support he helped publish two issues of anonymous woodcut collections. Also helped organise the Shanghai Woodcut Printers Society. 1943 went to Kunming. 1946 went to Hong Kong where he took up oil painting and joined the *Renjian Huahui*. 1948 was criticised by the Communist Party for his oil paintings. 1949 returned to Guangzhou. 1979 vice chairman of the CAA (NJ:345 *Meishu* 6/1990)

Zeng Jingchu (04/1918) From Shuangfeng, Hunan. 1939 started learning woodcuts on his own with the help of Li Hua and Ye Fu. 1947 studied at the Shanghai Meizhuan subsequently worked as art editor of various publications. Now works as director and editor of the New York -published Chinese language *Haineiwai* magazine. (NJ:369)

曾景初

Shi Lu (13/12/1919 -25/08/1982) From Sichuan, graduate of Dongfang Art College, Chengdu. 1939 went to Yan'an. 1949 editor in chief of *North-west Pictorial*. Restarted painting *guohua*. Important member of the Xi'an school of painting. (Sullivan 1996:313. NJ:385)

石鲁

Zhang Ding (b.1919) From Liaoning. 1932 studied Chinese painting in Beijing Art Academy. 1936 went to Nanjing. 1937 joined cartoon propaganda team. 1938 Lu Xun Art Academy Yan'an. 1949 taught in CAFA. 1957 vice president of CAFA. 1979 in charge of decoration of Beijing Airport Lounge. 1908 pres. of CAA. (Sullivan 1996:322)

张丁

Wu Guanzhong (b.1919) from Yixing, Jiangsu. 1937-1942 studied at National Art Academy, Hangzhou. 1946-1950 studied in France. 1950 taught at CAFA. 1955-64 taught oil painting at Beijing Fine Arts Normal College. 1964-74 taught at CAAC. Member of the BOPRA who championed the "abstract" element of art in the eighties. (Sullivan 1996:317)

吴冠中

1920-1929

Huang Yan (06/12/1920-14/02/1989) From Guangdong. self taught woodcut artist. 1937 resistance propaganda work. 1948 joined Renjian Huahui in Hong Kong. 1950s went to Beijing and worked in *Guangming Ribao* (NJ:394)

荒烟

Niu Wen (1922) From Lingshi, Shanxi. 1937 joined 8th army. Involved in anti Japanese propaganda performances and painting. 1941 studied at the Lu Xun Art Academy, Yan'an. 1949 with army to Sichuan. Edited the *New China Daily* and *New China Pictorial*. 1954 secretary of the CAA Chongqing branch. Vice chairman of the CAA Sichuan branch. Participated in National Art Exhibition in 1960, the First National Minorities Exhibition and 6NAE. (NJ:415 *Niu Wen Banhuaji* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1988)

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Liu Xun (03/1923) From Fujian. Joined CCP in 1938 and went to Yan'an in 1940. 1945 editor of the *Donbei Huabao* and *Lianhuahuabao*. Sent to the countryside during the anti-rightist campaign and jailed during the Cultural Revolution. 1977 assigned to Beijing Huayuan where he became vice-chairman. Vice-chairman of the Beijing CAA. (NJ:420)

刘迅

Wei Qimei (05/09/1923) From Anqing, Anhui province. 1947 graduated from the Central Academy. Has taught at the Beiping Yizhuan and the Central Academy. Participated in 6NAE (NJ:424.RML:12)

韦启美

Liu Ziming (26/06/1927) Woman artist from Yunnan. 1946 entered Guoli Beiping Yizhuan. 1949 studied in France. 1952 at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. 1956 returned to Beijing 1961 transferred to Kunming. 1985 assigned to Yunnan Huayuan. Participated in Yunnan Ten Exhibition and 6 NAE. (NJ:476)

刘自鸣

Li Tianxiang (12/02/1928) From Jingxian, Hebei. 1946 admitted to Beiping Guoli Yizhuan. 1950 graduated from the painting dept of the CAFA and stayed on as a research student. 1953 went to the Soviet Union to study at the Leningrad Repin Art Academy, oil painting dept. 1959 returned to China becoming head of the Luo Gongliu oil painting studio, CAFA. 1985 director of the Shanghai University Art College. Vice chairman of the CAA Shanghai branch. Work collected by the Museum of the Chinese Revolution. Work won award at the 6NAE (NJ: 486)

李天祥

Wang Qin (03/11/1928) Mongolian, from Chifeng, Mongolia. 1946 joined the army. 1947 studied at the Lu Xun Art Academy. 1949 propaganda worker. After 1954 worked in the Wenhuaaju at the Mongolian autonomous region and chaired the Mongolian branch of the CAA. Participated in the 4th National Art Exhibition. (NJ:479)

旺亲

Guan Bu (12/1928) Mongolian, from Guzhelimuwen. 1957 graduated from the oil painting department of the CAFA. 1964 graduated from the literature and art research class of the University of Inner Mongolia. Vice-chairman of the Beijing branch of the CAA Vice chairman of the Beijing Nationalities and Folk Art Research Society. Overall designer of the Mongolian hall in the Great Hall of the People. (RML:70)

官布

Yang Wenxiu (30/01/1929) Woman artist. Propaganda and new year painter. From Shandong. 1952 studied at Huadong Yizhuan. From 1953 onwards worked at the Shanghai People's Art Publishing House art dept. 1956 won Shanghai Youth Exhibition Second rank award. (NJ:503)

杨文秀

Zhou Shaohua (b.1929) From Shandong. 1941 joined the 8th army. 1948 graduated from Zhongyuan Univ. art dept. Vice Chairman of the Hubei Literature and Art Association and chairman of the Hubei branch of the CAA. Won award at the 6 NAE.

周绍华

1930-1939

Li Huanmin (10/1930) From Beijing. 1947 entered Beijing Guoli Yizhuan. 1949 Huabei University art dept. 1951 graduated from CAFA. Assigned to Sichuan as vice editor of *New China Daily*. Vice chairman of the CAA, Sichuan branch. (NJ:533)

李煥民

Yin Guoliang (15/01/1931) From Taiyuan, Shanxi. Early 50s graduated from CAFA. 1954 to Zhongnan Yizhuan. Now vice-director of Guangzhou Art Academy. Participated in 4NAE and 5NAE. (NJ:541)

尹国良

Zhan Jianjun (01/1931) Manchu, born in Shenyang. Studied *guohua* at middle school in Beijing Xuelu Painting Society and afterwards admitted to Beijing Guoli Yizhuan. 1953 graduated from the oil painting department of the CAFA and remained as a research student in ink and colour painting. 1955 entered the Maksimov oil painting class, graduating in 1957. Stayed on as a teacher and in 1960 went to teach in the Dong Xiwen studio. Member of BOPRA. Five Heroes of Mount Langya in Museum of the Revolution. Won silver award at the 5th NAE and gold at the 6NAE. Participated in the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition. (NJ:642)

詹建俊

Sun Meilan (23/07/1931) Woman artist from Taiyuan, Shanxi. 1950 admitted to the CAFA painting dept. 1953 graduated and was kept on. Teaches at the CAFA art history department. (NJ:550)

孙美兰

Ma Ke (07/1931) From Xinye, Henan. 1948 admitted to the Guoli Hangzhou Yizhuan. 1951 moved to the CAFA painting department, graduating in 1953. 1954 Assigned to work at the CAA, becoming editor of *Meishu*. 1958 assigned to the literature and art office of the *People's Daily* where he was chief editor. Vice chairman of the Chinese Print Artists Association.

马克

Wen Lipeng (1931-) From Xishui in Hubei. Son of Wen Yiduo. 1958 graduated From the CAFA oil painting dept. 1963 graduated from the oil painting research class of the CAFA. Later became head of the oil painting department of the CAFA. (NJ:563)

闻立鹏

Xiao Feng (02/1932) From Jiangdu, Jiangsu. 1943 took part in youth revolutionary art groups active in the Huadong liberated areas. 1950 entered East Campus of the CAFA (i.e Zafa) 1954 went to study in the Leningrad Repin Art Academy. 1960 graduated and returned to teach at the Zafa. 1973 assigned to Shanghai Huayuan sculpture and painting studio. 1983 returned to the Zafa becoming director in 1984 (NJ:566)

肖峰

Liu Wenxi (17/10/1933) From Zhejiang. 1950 learnt painting in Shanghai. 1953 entered the Zafa. Graduated in 1958 and became a teacher at the Xi'an Academy. 1980 became head of the Xi'an Academy *guohua* dept. 1984 vice-director of the academy (NJ:598)

刘文西

Kong Zhongqi (15/05/1934) Entered the Zafa as a reward for winning top prize in a Shanghai workers' cartoon exhibition in the fifties. 1960 graduated from the Zafa *guohua* dept, where he taught in the 1980s. (NJ 610).

孔仲起

Xu Qixiong (23/05/1934) From Wenzhou, Zhejiang. 1950 studied painting with the Wenzhou Art Workers Association. 1951 PLA art worker. 1955 admitted to CAFA. 1960 graduated and worked for *Renmin Ribao*. 1965 criticised and assigned to Wenzhou Applied Arts Research Office. 1980 assigned to Zhejiang Huayuan. 6NAE (NJ:611)

徐启雄

Shao Dajian (10/1934) From Dantu, Jiangsu. 1955 admitted to Leningrad Repin Art Academy art history and theory dept. 1960 returned to China and taught at the CAFA, history dept. Editor of *Meishu* (NJ:617)

邵大箴

Cao Dali (11/1934) From Shanxi. Emigrated to Indonesia with his family when 6y.o. 1956 returned to China and entered the CAFA oil painting dept. 1961 graduated. Now at Beijing Huayuan. (NJ:619)

曹达立

Jin Shangyi (26/12/1934) Born in Henan Province. 1953 graduated from the Central Academy oil painting department. 1955 entered the CAFA Maksimov oil painting research class. 1957 completed advanced oil painting class at the Central Academy and taught in the print dept. 1962 moved to the oil painting department, became vice head of the department and vice head of the academy. Member of the BOPRA. Is now president of the Central Academy (NJ:620.RML:96.*Meishu* 9/1988)

靳尚谊

Shui Tianzhong (03/01/1935) From Lanzhou, Gansu. 1955 graduated from North West Art Academy art dept. 1979 admitted to Chinese Art Research Institute research student class. 1982 graduated with MA in art history. Stayed on at the institute where he became head of the fine art section.

水天中

Hazi Aimaiti (10/1935) Uigur from Kashen, Xinjiang. 1954 graduated from the Kashen Shifan Xuexiao. 1957 graduated from the Xinjiang Academy art department and stayed on as teacher. Since 1959 he has worked in the Xinjiang Yixiao and then in the Uigur Autonomous Region Literary Association. 1984 taught at Xinjiang Art Academy, and is now dean. Chairman of the Xinjiang branch of the CAA. Participated in the 1977 South West Minorities Art Exhibition and the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition. His work won an award in the 6NAE. (NJ:637)

哈孜·艾买提

Gao Ertai (10/1935) From Jiangsu. 1955 graduated from Jiangsu Shifan Xueyuan. Researched ancient art in Dunhuang. Taught philosophy at Lanzhou University (NJ:637)

高而太

Zhu Naizheng (25/11/1935) From Zhejiang. 1953 admitted to CAFA. 1958 graduated from CAFA oil painting. 1959 assigned to Qinghai Literary Association. Vice-president of the Qinghai branch of CAA. 1980 taught at CAFA oil painting dept. Became vice-head of the CAFA, also in charge of the third studio. Member of BOPRA. 6NAE bronze award. (NJ:640)

朱乃正

Pu Guochang (12/1937) From Chengdu, Sichuan Province. 1959 graduated from the Central Academy, print department. Is now head of Fine Art Department of the Guizhou Yizhuan. Participated in the Ban Zaizi Exhibition (NJ:680. RML:1042)

浦国昌

Long Qinglian (10.1938) Miao nationality from Guizhang, Anhui. Graduated from the CAFA *guohua* department in 1965. Worked in the Xinjiang Museum and then in the Xinjiang Huayuan. Participated in the South West Minority Artists Exhibition. Participated in the 6NAE (NJ:699)

龙清廉

Yang Changkui (12/12/1938) Dong nationality from Wushu, Guizhou. 1956 entered art dept. of Guizhou Nationalities College, middle school. 1963 graduated from Guizhou University art dept. Assigned to CAA, Guizhou branch, of which he is now chairman. Participated in the South West Minorities Art Exhibition, 1st National Minorities Art Exhibition (NJ:703)

杨长槐

Jiang Tiefeng (b.1938) Born in Ningbo, Zhejiang province. 1959-1964 Studied the CAFA where he specialised in woodcut prints. Volunteered to work in Yunnan after graduation. Taught at the Yunnan Academy of Art (but is not listed as a teacher). 1983 Emigrated to the USA

蒋铁峰

Yuan Yunsheng (1938) from Jiangsu. 1962 graduated from the CAFA oil painting department. Taught at the CAFA mural painting research studio. Member of the BOPRA. 1987 moved to the US.

袁运生

Zhang Jianzhong (1938) From Yunnan. *Guohua* painter. 1964 graduated from Yunnan Art Academy. Vice director of Yunnan Huayuan. Participated in the 1979 National Art Exhibition. (RML:1056)

张建中

Lang Shaojun (01/02/1939) From Dingzhou, Hebei Province. 1961 graduated from the Hebei Normal University art dept, and remained as a teacher. 1978 entered the Chinese Art Research Institute. 1981 graduated with an MA. Remained in the Institute as head of the modern art research dept. (NJ:708)

郎绍君

Wang Jinyuan (02/1939) From Xianting, Hebei Province. 1964 graduated from the Central Academy of Art, *guohua* department. Assigned to the Yunnan Qunzhong Yishuguan. 1970-1989 worked at the art photography studio of the Provincial Cultural Bureau, then later became a painter at the Yunnan Huayuan of which he is now director. Participated in the Yunnan 10 Exhibition and 6NAE. (NJ:710.BRZ:152)

王晋元

Dong Kejun (18/02/1939) From Chongqing. Self-taught. Now Assistant director of the Guizhou Huayuan. Held a solo exhibition in Beijing, 1988. (NJ:709)

董克俊

Zhang Zhenxue (21/06/1939) From Chenggu, Shaanxi. 1962 graduated from Xi'an Academy of Art. taught in a middle school. 1984 assigned to Xi'an Guohuayuan. Participated in the 6NAE. (NJ:714)

张振学

Yao Zhonghua (17/07/1939) From Kunming, Yunnan. 1965 studied at the CAFA middle school. 1959 entered the CAFA oil painting dept. Dong Xiwen studio. 1964 graduated and was assigned to work in Yunnan where he became vice-director of art photography studio of the Provincial Cultural Bureau. Vice director of the Yunnan Huayuan. (NJ:716)

姚钟华

Ding Shaoguang (10/1939) Born in Yuncheng, Shanxi. Attended special classes at the CAFA while still at high school. 1957-61 attended the Central Academy of Art and Design. (NJ:721)

丁绍光

Zhou Sicong (11/1939) Woman artist, from Ninghe, Hebei. 1955-58 CAFA middle school. 1963 graduated from the CAFA *guohua* dept. Assigned to Beijing Huayuan. Vice president of the CAA Beijing branch. The People and the Premier *guohua* won first prize at the 5NAE 1979. 6NAE silver award. (NJ:723)

周思聪

Wang Zhenzhong (12/1939) Hui nationality. From Cangzhou, Hebei. 1958 entered CAFA *guohua* dept. 1963 graduated. Taught at Guizhou University, then at Guizhou Yishu Zhuanke Xuexiao. Participated in the South West Minorities Art Exhibition (NJ:725)

王振中

1940-1949

Ma Hongzeng (12/04/1940) From Gaochui, Jiangsu. 1966 graduated from CAFA, art history dept. 1973 researcher at the Jiangsu Art Museum. Later vice director of the museum (NJ:734)

马鸿增

Chen Zhichuan (05/1940) Woman artist, born in Ruiab, Zhejiang. 1964 graduated from Sichuan Art Academy. Assigned to Industrial Art Research Institute, Kunming. 1981 taught at ZAFA. (RML:532)

陈文川

Zhang Qiang (07/1940) From Haimen Jiangsu. 1965 graduated from the CAFA art history and theory dept where he stayed on as a teacher. 1974 assigned to the art department of the Bureau of Culture. 1979 transferred to the Art Research Academy where he was deputy editor of *Meishu Shilun* and director of the *Zhongguo Meishubao*. (NJ 737)

张强

E. Surutai (08/1940) Daur Nationality. From Inner Mongolia. 1968 graduated from the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts and assigned to work in Beijing. 1973 assigned to Hulun Beier Exhibition Hall. Member of the Mongolian Branch of the CAA (NJ:739)

鄂·苏如台

Liu Shaohui (29/08/1940) Born in Yongxing, Hunan. 1965 graduated from the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts. Assigned to Yunnan Peoples' Publishing House until 1984 when he left for Shenzhen. 1986 transferred to the Guilin Teachers' College. Participated in Monkey Group Exhibition and Yunnan Ten Exhibition. (NJ:739)

Li Zhongxiang (25/11/1940) Born in Chongqing, Sichuan province. 1965 graduated from the Yunnan Art Academy, print dept. 1966-1973 worked at the Yunnan Industry and Communications Exhibition Hall, and at the Provincial Exhibition Hall. 1974-1984 art photography studio of the Provincial Cultural Bureau. 1985 vice-president of the Yunnan Huayuan. Participated in the Yunnan Ten Exhibition. *Li Zhongxiang Banhuaqi* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1990

Hu Bingxuan (07/12/1940) Buyi nationality from Duyun, Guizhou. 1964 graduated from Guizhou University art dept. taught at Zunyi Normal University. 1983 assigned to Zunyi Literary Assoc., chairman of the city CAA. Participated in the South West Minorities Art Exhibition and 1st National Minorities Art Exhibition (NJ:746)

Li Shinan (07/12/1940) From Shanghai. Went to Xi'an in the fifties. Learnt *guohua* from He Haixia and Shi Lu in the sixties. 1977 Xi'an Arts and Crafts Institute. 1984 professional artists with the CAA Hubei branch. Participated in 6NAE, 2nd National Strip Cartoon Exhibition (NJ:746)

Dong Xinbing (b1940). From Wuxi, Jiangxi Province. *Guohua* painter. 1982 graduated from the Nanjing Art Academy, student of Liu Haisu. Is now a painter of the Jiangsu Huayuan. Held solo exhibitions in Nanjing 1985 and Beijing 1986. (RML 498. BRZ:8)

Ge Pengren (06/02/1941) From Dongbian, Jilin. 1958 studied at the middle school of the CAFA. 1966 graduated from the CAFA oil painting dept. 1978-1980 CAFA oil painting dept MA graduate. Taught at CAFA oil painting, 4th studio. (NJ:754)

Tian Shixin (08/03/1941) From Beijing. 1964 graduated from Beijing Art College and went to Guizhou as a middle school teacher. 1978 assigned to Guizhou Yizhuan, head of the sculpture studio. 6NAE award winner. (NJ:756)

Guo Changxin (24/05/1941) From Liaoning. 1965 graduated from Lu Xun Art Academy print dept. Assigned to Liaoning Art Press. 1972-1979 Liaoning Exhibition Hall and also Liaoning Art Museum 1980 Liaoning Huayuan. Participated in Exhibition to Commemorate Martyr, Zhang Zhixin (NJ:759)

Fu Lin (08/1941) From Yuanping Shanxi. Self-taught. 1963 joined the PLA. 1970 assigned to the creation studio of the Beijing military district political bureau. His woodcuts won awards at the 8th National Print Exhibition and 6NAE. (NJ:764)

Pi Daojian (17/09/1941) From Hubei. Art critic. 1958 graduated from higher middle school and did a variety of jobs. 1979-1981 Hubei Art Academy art history MA. Teacher at the Academy. (NJ:765)

Yixi Zeren (11/1941) From Kangding, Sichuan. 1956 studied at the middle school attached to the Sichuan Academy of Art, minorities class. 1962 worked at the Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture art museum. Participated in the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition and 6NAE. (NJ:770)

Jiang Baolin (10/01/1942) From Pingdu, Shandong Province. 1967 graduated from the ZAFA. 1981 graduated from the CAFA, special *shanshui* research student class under Li Keran. Now works as a painter at the Zhejiang Huayuan. Held solo exhibitions in Beijing in 1985 and 1987. (NJ:774. *Jiang Baolin Shuimo Huaji* Zaoxing Chubanshe 1989)

Yang Lizhou (02/1942) From Linyi, Shanxi. 1957 Xi'an Art Academy middle school. 1961-1966 Xi'an Art Academy oil painting dept. BA. 1978 -1980 CAFA *guohua* figure painting research student class. 1981 Chinese Painting Research Huayuan. 1984 assigned to head the fine art office of the Bureau of Culture 1989 vice head of the National Art Museum. 6NAE, gold award. (NJ:777)

Wang Yingchun (03/1942) Woman artist From Taiyuan, Shanxi. 1957 entered Xi'an Art Academy middle school. 1961-1966 Xi'an Art Academy oil painting dept. BA. 1978-1980 CAFA *guohua* figure painting research class. Assigned to the Chinese Painting Research Huayuan. 6NAE, gold award. 7NAE silver award. (NJ:778)

王迎春

He Neng (08/1942) From Chengdu. 1965 graduated from the Sichuan Academy, painting dept. majoring in *guohua*. Assigned to Kunming where he became director for the Yunnan News agency, set designer for the Yunnan Opera company, then to the Yunnan Film Studio. 1980 head of the Yunnan Art Academy fine art dept. (NJ:785)

何能

Jia Youfu (11/1942) Born to a peasant family, in Suning, Hebei Province. 1955 learnt *guohua* from Ju Lian, and in 1958 from Xue Yulu. 1960 admitted to the CAFA, where he was taught by Li Keran, Ye Qianyu, Li Kuchan, and He Haixia. 1965 graduated, and was assigned to teach at the Central Academy of Drama stage design department. Was able to continue painting in his spare time during the Cultural Revolution. 1977 transferred to the CAFA, and made his 3rd trip to the Taihang mountains. 1986 made his 17th trip to the Taihang mountains. Continues to teach at the CAFA, *guohua* department. 6th NAE, bronze award. Held solo exhibition in Beijing 1988. (*Jingzhen Lou Huatan* Xinhua Chubanshe 1991 *Jia Youfu Zhongguohua Ji* Jinri Zhongguo Chubanshe 1992)

贾又福

Liu Xilin (22/07/1942) From Shandong. 1963 studied at Shandong Yizhuan, then went to Xinjiang to edit the *Kashen Daily*. 1978-1980 CAFA research student class. 1981 National Art Museum, vice director of research office. (NJ:784)

刘曦林

Xu Zuliang (01/1943) From Jurong, Jiangsu. 1965 graduated from university with a degree in Chinese. Vice editor of Jiangsu Huakan. (RML:458)

许祖良

Shen Xingong (15/08/1943) From Ningbo, Zhejiang. 1966 graduated from the Nanjing Art Academy. 1978 Readmitted as an oil painting research student, graduating in 1981. Now vice-head of the Nanjing Art Academy. (NJ:804)

沈行工

Li Xiu (11/1943) Woman. artist of Yi nationality. From Yunnan. 1968 graduated from Guangxi Art Academy. 1970-1980 art worker for Kunming Railway. 1980 transferred to the Yunnan Huayuan. Participated in South West Minorities Art Exhibition, First National Ethnic Minorities Art Exhibition top award, 6NAE excellence award (NJ:809)

李秀

Renzhen Langjia (also Ma Guozhang) (12/1943) Tibetan, from Ganzi, Sichuan. 1964 graduated from the nationalities class of the Sichuan Academy. Art worker at the Ganzi Exhibition Hall, vice director of the Ganzi Culture Hall and head of the Cultural Bureau. Head of the Ganzi Artists Association. Participated in 1977 South West Minorities Art Exhibition and the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition. (NJ:810)

仁真朗加

Gesang Yixi (12/1943) Tibetan from Ganzi, Sichuan. 1962 graduated from Sichuan Academy of Art minorities class. Assigned to head the cultural hall of Xiangcheng county. 1985 transferred to the Ganzi literary assoc. Participated in 4NAE (NJ:810)

格桑益西

Li Shan (12/1944) From Lanxi, Heilongjiang. 1968 graduated from Shanghai Drama Academy. Participated in the China Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing and "China's New Art, Post 1989" (RML:403.BRZ:82)

李山

Nima Zeren (b.1944) Tibetan, From Batang, Sichuan. 1962 graduated from the minorities class of the Sichuan Academy of Art. Art cadre of the county cultural hall. 1983 entered the Sichuan Academy for a year of further studies. Vice director of the Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture art hall. Researcher of Tibetan and Buddhist painting. Took part in the First National Minorities Exhibition. (NJ:827)

尼瑪澤仁

Li Huasheng (b.1944) From Yibin, Sichuan *Guohua* painter. Studied with Chen Zizhuang. (Silbergeld, J and Gong Jisui *Contradictions. Artistic Life, the Socialist State and the Chinese Artist Li Huasheng*. Univ of Washington 1993)
李华生

Chen Yongle (b1944) From Zhejiang. Cadre at the Yunnan branch of the CAA. 7NAE bronze award.
陈永乐 (RML:1054)

Zhao Haipeng (05/01/1945) From Xianxian, Hebei. 1968 graduated from Hebei Yishu Sifan Xueyuan art dept. 1970 assigned to Tanggu Cultural Centre. 1976 started woodcut printing. Participated in 2nd National Youth Exhibition, 6NAE, 9 National Print Exhibition (NJ:829)
赵海鹏

Sun Jingbo (01/1945) Graduated from the CAFA oil painting research students class in 1980. Taught at the Mural painting dept.
孙景波

Long Rui (08/1946) Born in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. 1966 graduated from Beijing Arts and Crafts School, specialising in commercial art. Worked in the Beijing Arts and Crafts factory for 13 years. 1979-1981 graduated from the CAFA special *shanshui* research student class under Li Keran. Now a painter at the Beijing Chinese Painting Research Huayuan. (BRZ:22. *The Life and Works of Long Rui*, Contemporary Chinese Artists Series. Sichuan Art Publishing House undated.)
龙瑞

Sun Weimin (12/1946) From Heilongjiang. Graduated from CAFA middle school. 1984-1987 research student at the CAFA. Participated "Contemporaries" exhib. 1980, 6NAE, 7NAE and Nude Oil Painting exhib. (RML:31.BRZ:26)
孙为民

Qijia Dawa (30/12/1946) Tibetan, from Ganzi, Sichuan. Became orphaned in his childhood and was raised by the government. 1959-1964 Sichuan Academy of Art, minorities class. Assigned to the Sichuan branch of the CAA. Participated in the South-west Minorities Artists Exhibition and the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition (NJ:852.RML:1003)
其加达瓦

Dai Hengyang (b.1946) From Fenghua, Zhejiang. 1969 graduated in stage design from the Shanghai Drama Academy. 1975 taught oil painting at the Shanghai Drama Academy. Collective picture won gold award at 6NAE. (NJ:854)
戴恒扬

Ai Xuan (11/01/1947) From Jinghua, Zhejiang. 1967 graduated from CAFA middle school. 1973 propaganda worker for PLA in Chengdu. Now at Beijing Huayuan. 2nd National Youth Exhibition (NJ:854)
艾轩

Kelimu Naserding (15/02/1947) Uigur, from Urumuqi, Xinjiang. 1960 admitted to the Central Nationalities Academy to study painting, graduating in 1967. Assigned to the Yili Exhibition Hall. 1978-1981 CAFA oil painting research class. Assigned to Xinjiang Huayuan. 1988 studied in France. Now vice head of the Xinjiang Huayuan. 6 NAE bronze award. (NJ:855)
克里木. 纳斯尔丁

Wang Mengqi (03/1947) From Wuxi, Jiangsu. 1974-1977 studied *guaohua* at Nanjing Art Academy, where he now teaches. (NJ:856)
王孟奇

Pan Yaochang (05/1947) From Xinhui, Guangdong. Art historian. Teaches at the ZAFa. (RML:559)
潘耀昌

Pan Gongkai (b.1947) From Hangzhou. Son of Pan Tianshou. Studied with his father and was admitted to the ZAFa. 1979 taught at the ZAFa *guohua* department. Head of the *Guohua* dept. Director of the Pan Tianshou Memorial Museum. (NJ:864)
潘公凯

Feng Guodong (03/02/1948) From Panyu, Guangdong. Member of the BOPRA, and took part in its first three exhibitions, also participated in the China Avant/Garde Exhibition Beijing. (RML:18)
冯国东

He Duoling (09/05/1948) From Chengdu, Sichuan. 1979 sent to the countryside as a rusticated youth. 1977 admitted to the Sichuan Academy of Art. 1982 graduated from the academy's oil painting
何多苓

research students class. Assigned to the Chengdu Huayuan. Won silver and bronze awards at the 6 NAE. (NJ:867)

Luo Zhongli (23/07/1948) From Bishan, born in Chongqing Sichuan Province. 1968 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art middle school and became a worker at the Dabashan steel factory. 1979-1982 studied at the Sichuan Academy of Arts, majoring in oil painting. 1983-1986 masters degree in painting at the Royal Belgian Academy, Antwerp. Teacher at the Sichuan Academy of Art. Participated in Exhibition to Commemorate Martyr, Zhang Zhixin. Won top award for Father at the Second Youth Art Exhibition. (NJ:869.RML:1005)

罗中立

Luosong Xiangqiu (11/1948) Tibetan from, Batang, Sichuan. 1968 graduated from Kangding Shifan Xueyuan (RML:1009)

洛松向秋

Ah Ge (b.1948). Woman artist of Miao nationality. 1964 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art, minorities class. Assigned to the Sichuan branch of the CAA. Participated in the Southwest Minority Artists Exhibition; First National Ethnic Minorities Artists Exhibition; 8th National Print Exhibition, excellence award, 6th NAE bronze award.(NJ:873)

阿 嘎

Zhu Zude (07/04/1949) From Shanghai. 1978 further studies course at Sichuan Academy of Art. 1979. Yunnan Applied Arts Research Office. 1986 CAFA. Returned to old work unit after graduation. Participated in the 5th NAE, 2nd National Youth Exhibition, and First National Minorities Exhibition (NJ:876)

朱祖德

Zhong Ming (06/1949) From Zhejiang. Art editor at the People's publishing House. Member of BOPRA (RML:75)

钟 鸣

Gao Minglu (10/1949) From Tianjin. 1968 sent as a rusticated youth to Inner Mongolia. 1973 admitted to Wumeng Teachers College, Inner Mongolia. 1978 further studies at Tianjin Art Academy. 1982 admitted to the Chinese Art History Research Institute art history research class. 1984 became an editor of *Meishu*. One of the principal organisers of the China Avant/Garde Exhibition held in the National Art Museum 1989. Is now reading a PhD in art history at Harvard.

高名潞

Wang Keping (b.1949) from Hebei. 1969 graduated from middle school in Tianjin and was "sent down" to Heilongjiang province. 1970 joined drama troupe of Kunming then 1975 worked in a factory in Hebei. 1976 joined drama troupe of the Central Broadcasting Station, Beijing, as actor and script-writer. One of the main members of the Stars. Moved to France in 1984. *The Stars Ten Years*

王克平

1950-1959

Li Song (02/1950) Born in Tianjin. 1975 graduated from Zhongshi, then assumed office in Heilongjiang Cultural Office. 1981 assigned to Hebei, Shijiazhuang Applied Arts Research Office. 1985 admitted to the Calligraphy studio of Beijing Normal University, graduating in 1987. (NJ:885)

李 松

Chen Yiming (20/12/1950) From Wuxi, Jiangsu. Self taught. 1982-1984 further studies at CAFA. 1985 research student at the oil painting department of the ZAFA. Participated in the 30 Years Since the Founding of State Exhibition, the Second National Youth Exhibition, 6 NAE and the Second National Strip Cartoon Exhibition. (NJ:891)

陈宜明

Li Xianting (12/1950) From Hebei. Art critic who also wrote under the pen names Hu Cun and Li Jiatun. Formerly editor of *Meishu* but was fired in 1983 during the Anti- Spiritual Pollution Campaign. Subsequently worked for the *Zhongguo Meishubao*. Was fired from the Chinese Art Research Institute in 1993. Curated the China/Avant Garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989. (NJ:892)

栗宪庭

Zhang Guilin (27/12/1951) Hui nationality from Beijing. 1978 graduated from the CAFA print dept. Taught at the dept. Participated in the Exhibition to Commemorate Martyr, Zhang Zhixin, and AYCA Exhibition. (NJ:898)

张桂林

Peng Xiao (11/1951) From Taiyuan, Shanxi. 1982 graduated from Yunnan Academy of Art, print dept. Art editor at the People's Publishing House. 8 National Print Exhibition. 6NAE and 9 National Print Exhibition (NJ:898)

彭晓

Hao Ping (03/1952) From Kunming, Yunnan. 1980 Graduated from the print dept. of the Yunnan Art Academy. Was assigned to work at the Yunnan branch of the CAA. 1985-86 further studies at the CAFA (NJ:900)

郝平

Lü Shengzhong (01/04/1952) From Pingdu, Shandong Province. 1969-1976 army. 1978 graduated from Shandong Normal University Art Department. 1987 graduated from the Central Academy of Art, folk art department, MA. Was kept on as a teacher in the department. Participated in the China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. Held "Lü Shengzhong Papercut Art" exhibition, Beijing 1988. (NJ:899. *Lü Shengzhong Zuopin* Hunan Meishu Chubanshe 1991)

吕胜中

Liang Jiang (b.1952) Graduate of Guangzhou Art Academy oil painting dept. Research student at the Chinese Art Research Institute.

梁江

Deng Qiyao (b.1952) From Guangdong. 1982 graduated from Yunnan University. Theorist and cultural anthropologist. Also oil painter and print maker (RML:1046)

邓启耀

Ma Desheng (b.1952) From Beijing. Worked as a draftsman during the Cultural Revolution- refused admission to art school on account of physical disability. Founder member of the Stars, and participated in their exhibitions. Moved to Switzerland in 1985. *The Stars Ten Years*

马德升

Huang Rui (b.1952) From Beijing. 1959-68 primary and secondary education in Beijing. 1968-75 sent down to Inner Mongolia. 1975-79 worked in a Beijing leather goods factory. 1976 arrested for writing a poem for the April 5 demonstration in Tiananmen. Member of the Stars. 1984 Moved to Japan *The Stars Ten Years*.

黄锐

Zeng Xiaofeng (15/01/1952) Born in Kunming, Yunnan Province. 1975 began to teach himself painting. 1982 entered the Yunnan Province Art Photography Work Studio, and began to work copying cliff paintings and researching ethnic art. 1983 collaborated with two folk artists in Guizhou and Yunnan to produce several tens of thousands of pieces of primitive style pottery. 1984 admitted to the Yunnan Huayuan. Participated in 2nd National Youth Exhibition; 7 NAE 2x bronze award. Solo exhibition Central Academy, Beijing 1987. (NJ:899)

曾晓峰

Zhang Shaoxia (15/02/1953) From Anhui. 1972-1974 studied at Nanjing Shifan University, teaching at a middle school after graduation. 1979-1982 MA in foreign art history at the Nanjing Art Academy. Co-wrote *A History of Modern Chinese Painting* with Li Xiaoshan. 1988 went to head the art department of Hainan University (NJ:906)

张少侠

Zhuo Hejun (14/07/1953) Born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. 1963 became a middle school teacher. After 1964 was a designer at Hangzhou Silk Printing Factory and Hangzhou Plastic Factory. 1976 worked in the Zhejiang branch of the CAA. 1979-1981 studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Art, *shanshui* research class, where he stayed on as a teacher. 1987 went to the US for a year at the invitation of the University of Minnesota (NJ:802).

卓鹤君

Chen Danqing (11/08/1953) Family from Guangdong, born in Shanghai. 1978-1980 CAFA research student. Taught at the academy. 1982 went to the USA. (NJ:909)

陈丹青

Wang Chuan (17/10/1953) From Hebei, born in Chengdu, Sichuan. 1971-1973 worked successively as a road digger, a machine worker in a railway machine factory and then as an artworker. During this period he also taught himself painting. 1978 admitted to the Sichuan Academy of Art, *guohua* painting department, graduating in 1982. 1985 moved to Shenzhen to edit *Modern Decoration*

王川

Magazine. 1986 organised Shenzhen "0" Exhibition. Participated in China Avant-Garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. Solo Exhibition, Beijing 1989, "Black Dot" exhibition Shenzhen 1990. (NJ 910. BRZ:140. Lü Peng Wang Chuan, *The Beginning of the Voyage to the Primitive* Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1991.)

Yixi Sangdan (12/1953) Tibetan, from Danba, Sichuan. 1974 graduated from Kangding Normal College.

益西桑丹

Participated in the First National Ethnic Minorities Exhibition (RML:1013)

Zhu Xinjian (b.1953) 1986 graduated from Nanjing Academy of Art. 6NAE, New Literati Painting Exhib.

朱新建

(BRZ:14)

Zhang Jun (51/08/1954) From Yongding, Fujian. 1982 graduated from the CAFA print dept and stayed on as teacher. 1983-84 studied in Paris. 1987 MA degree in Paris. Teaches at the CAFA.

张骏

Participated in the AYCA exhibition (NJ:916).

Huang Yongping (1954) Born in Quanzhou, Fujian. 1982 graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Art, oil painting department. 1982 to 1989 taught at the Xiamen secondary school. 1989 emigrated to France. Participated in "Five Artists' Exhibition", Xiamen 1983; "Xiamen Dada", Fuzhou 1986; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing, 1989; China Avant-garde, Berlin 1993. Has also carried out many "happenings" and Installation works in China and abroad. (Gao Minglu 337)

黄永平

Cheng Conglin (b.1954) 1977 entered Sichuan Academy of Art. Taught there and at the CAFA for 2 years.

程丛林

Zhu Yiyong (b.1954) From Sichuan. Sichuan Academy of Art class of 1977 graduate. Taught at the Sichuan Academy of Art. Won Award at the 6 NAE. (NJ:938)

朱毅勇

Xu Bing (08/02/1955) Born Chongqing, Sichuan province. 1981 graduated from the CAFA print department. Lectured in the Central Academy between 1988 and 1989. Has lived in the USA since 1990. Participated in the AYCA exhibition; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. Exhibition with Lu Shengzhong in Beijing 1988. (NJ:920..BRZ:88)

徐冰

Zhou Chunya (26/03/1955) From Chengdu, Sichuan. 1982 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art, print department. 1988 graduated from Kassel Germany. Is now a painter at the Sichuan Huayuan. Participated in 2nd National Youth Exhibition; AYCA, Exhibition; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (NJ:921. BRZ:72)

周春芽

Gu Wenda (b.1955?) Born in Shanghai. 1976 graduated from the Shanghai College of Applied Art. 1981 graduated from the ZFAA, special *shanshui* research painting class. 1987 began his studies at the San Francisco Art College. Solo exhibition in Xi'an 1986, "China's New Art, Post 1989".

谷文达

Wang Yidong (05/1955) From Shandong. 1982 graduated from the CAFA oil painting dept and stayed on as a teacher. AYCA Exhibition 6NAE (NJ:922)

王沂东

Tian Liming (05/1955) Born in Beijing. From Hefei, Anhui Province. 1971 PLA artist. 1989 admitted to the CAFA *guohua* research student. Now teaches at the Central Academy. Participated in the New Literati Painting Exhibition, Beijing 1989. (NJ:922. *Tian Liming Huaji Guangxi Meishu Chubanshe* 1991.)

田黎明

Mao Xuhui (06/1955) From Chongqing, Sichuan Province. 1982 graduated from the Yunnan Art Academy, oil painting dept. Works at the Kunming Film Company, publicity department. Member of the South West Art Research Group. Participated in New Figurative Painting Exhibition, (Shanghai/Nanjing) South West Modern Art Exhibition 1988; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (RML:1046.BRZ:146)

毛旭辉

Gao Xiaohua (09/12/1955) From Henan. 1982 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art. Taught oil painting at the Sichuan Academy of Art and the CAFA. Lives in the USA. (NJ:926)

高小华

Pan Dehai (03/1956) From Siping, Jilin Province. 1982 graduated from North East Normal University oil painting dept. Assigned to teach at the Yunnan Miners' Middle School. Later moved to Beijing. Member of the South West Art research Group. Participated in the New Figurative Painting Exhibitions, Shanghai, Nanjing and Yunnan; South West Modern Art exhibition, Chengdu 1988; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (Gao Minglu 257-258, BRZ:144)

Ding Fang (07/1956) From Wugong, Shanxi Province. 1982 graduated from the Nanjing Art Academy applied arts dept. 1986 graduated as an oil painting research student from the same academy. Participated in the Jiangsu Youth Art Week, Nanjing 1985; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989. "China's New Art, Post 1989" (BRZ:78)

Yang Zhilin (08/1956) Born in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. 1982 graduated from Nanjing Arts College, applied arts dept. Works as a lecturer at the Nanjing Normal University. Collective propaganda work won silver award at 6NAE. Participated in (and helped organise) Jiangsu Youth Art Week, Nanjing 1985; Participated in and designed the logo for the China/Avant Garde Exhibition 1989. (NJ:929 RML 463. BRZ:120)

Chen Xiangxun (21/10/1956) From Pan'an, Zhejiang province. 1984 graduated from the ZAFAs as a *guohua* research student specialising in *shanshui*. Now teaches at the academy. 6 NAE silver award; AYCA exhibition. (NJ:930. BRZ:12))

Su Jianghua (b.1956) Tujia nationality from Hunan. 1982 graduated from Central Nationalities Academy art dept. Worked as designer at an enamel factory in Kunming (RML:1049)

Lü Peng (b.1956) 1977-1981 studied political science and law at Sichuan Teacher's University. Wrote and translated many books on Western and Chinese art. Best known is the *History of Modern Chinese Art 1979 to 1989* co-written with Yi Dan. In the early 90's he set up the magazine *Art and Market* and also organised the first commercial art Biennale. In 1993 he wrote an article in which he suggested the avant-garde had done its work and should now settle down to commercial painting.

Wei Qicong (b.1956) Born in Kunming, Yunnan Province. 1980 graduated from the Simao Normal University. 1990 further studies at the Central Academy. First taught at the Simao Fourth Middle School, now teaches in Xiamen. Participated in the Manka-Five man Exhibition, Kunming 1986. Won Gold award at the 7NAE. (RML1064)

Hou Wenzhi (b.1956) Woman artist. 1982 graduated from the ZAFAs oil painting dept. Participated in New Figurative Painting Exhibition, Shanghai, then went to study in the USA. (Gao Minglu 256)

Wang Guangyi (b.1956) From Harbin. 1984 graduated from the ZAFAs, oil painting dept. Taught in the oil painting department of the Hubei Gongxueyuan. Member and organiser of the Northern Art Group. Participated in the China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (BRZ:86)

Wang Huangsheng (b.1956) Vice director of the Shantou Youth Art Society, Guangdong

Wang Qiang (24/06/1957) From Hangzhou. 1985 graduated from the ZAFAs sculpture department where he was kept on as a teacher. Participated in the "1985 New Space Exhibition." (RML:505)

Hong Zaixin (15/07/1957) From Hangzhou. 1984 graduated from the ZAFAs and then taught at the art history department. (RML:544)

Wang Falin (10/1957) 1985 graduated from the Central Institute of Industrial Art. Assigned to Sichuan Light Industry Research Unit. Participated in "Red, Yellow, Blue" exhibition and South West Modern Art Exhibition, Chengdu 1988.

Zhang Peili (11/1957) Born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. 1984 graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Art, oil painting department. 1984 taught at the Hangzhou College of Applied Arts. Moved to Finland. Participated in the "New Space '85 Exhibition" Hangzhou 1985; The activities of the Pond Society 1986/7; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993; China Avant-garde Exhibition, Berlin 1993. (NJ:937)

Yang Xiaoyan (b.1957) Graduated from Guangzhou Art Academy oil painting dept and began an art history MA.

Li Xiaoshan (b.1957) Studied at the Nanjing Academy of Art. Co-wrote *A History of Modern Chinese Painting* with Zhang Shaoxia. Also wrote the article "My Opinion on Contemporary Chinese Painting" which caused a great controversy in the art world. Teaches at the Nanjing Academy of Art, and continues to write art criticism. (RML:460)

Wang Yi (b.1957) From Shanghai. Teacher at the Sichuan Academy of Art. Participated in the 1988 South West Art Exhibition.

Zhang Xiaogang (02/1958) From Kunming, Yunnan Province. 1982 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art, majoring in oil painting. Now teaches at the academy. Participated in New Figurative Painting Exhibiton, Shanghai/Nanjing 1985; South West Modern Art Exhibiton, 1988; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (BRZ:84)

Ye Yongqing (04/1958) From Kunming, Yunnan Province. 1982 graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Art, oil painting. Now teaches at the academy. Participated in South West Modern Art Exhibiton, 1988; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (BRZ:92)

Ma Lu (24/08/1958) Born in Beijing. 1982 graduated from CAFA. 1984 Graduated from Hamburg Art Academy. Now teaches at the CAFA mural painting department. Participated in the Towards the Future Exhibition and China/avant-garde exhibition, Beijing. (NJ:941)

Shen Qin (11/1958) From Nanjing, Jiangsu. 1982 graduated from the Jiangsu Guohuayuan study class. Is now a professional artist at the Jiangsu Guohuayuan. 1983 held an individual exhibition in Nanjing. Participated in the Jiangsu Youth Art Week, Nanjing 1985; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (RML:468.BRZ:114)

Jiao Yingqi (b.1958) Born in Feixian, Shandong. 1975 finished high school and was sent to the countryside. 1979 entered Shandong Teachers College to study art. 1986-1989 CAFA mural department MA. Participated in Sao Paulo Art Biennial 1995

She Benming (b.1958) From Shanxi. 1982 graduated with MA from CAFA. Participated in the November Exhibition; Towards the Future Exhibition; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989 (BRZ:102)

Wang Jianwei (b.1958) From Sichuan. ZAFMA MA graduate. Now self employed artist. Participated in the 6 NAE and "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993

Xia Xiaowan (04/1959) From Beijing. 1982 graduated from the CAFA. Now teaches at the Central Academy of Drama. Participated in the November Exhibition; Towards the Future Exhibition; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993. (BRZ:90)

Zhou Jingxin (04/09/1959) From Nantong, Jiangsu. 1984 graduated from Nanjing Academy of Art. 1989 guohua MA at same academy and stayed as teacher. 6NAE and 7NAE. (NJ:944)

Zhen Xu (10/1959) Born Lancang, Yunnan Province. 1982 graduated from Yunnan Art College, majoring in printing. Now works in the Simao Art Museum of the Masses. 6NAE gold award Participated in the Manka-Five man Exhibition, Kunming 1986 (NJ:944)

郑旭

Bao Jianfei (b.1959) Woman artist From Hangzhou. 1981 graduated from the ZAFa print department and was assigned as an interior decorator to the provincial architecture and design institute. Participated in the "1985 New Space Exhibition." (Gao Minglu:156-157)

包剑斐

Ma Yun (b.1959) Hui Nationality from Hebei. Cadre at the Yunnan Art Academy (RML:1045)

马云

1960-1969

Chen Ping (01/02/1960) From Beijing. 1984 graduated from the CAFA *guohua* department. Teacher at CAFA. Participated in the New Literati Painting Exhibition in Beijing 1989. (NJ:945)

陈平

Lin Chun (03/1960) From Fujian. 1985 graduated from the ZAFa, sculpture. Taught at Xiamen University College of Art. (RML:626)

林春

Wu Shanzhuan (b.1960) From Zhoushan, Zhejiang. 1986 graduated from the teacher training class of the ZAFa and was assigned to work at the Zhoushan Qunzhong Yishuguan. Founder of the "Red Humour Group", participated in the "70% Red, 25% Black, 5 %White" Exhibition, The China/Avant-garde exhibition Beijing; China Avant-Garde exhibition, Berlin.

吴山专

Yi Dan (b.1960) 1977-1981 studied at Sichuan University. 1982 went to the US and took an MA in Literature at Michigan State University, graduating in 1984. Co-authored the book *History of Modern Chinese Art 1979 to 1989*, with Lü Peng. Teaches in the Chinese department of Sichuan University.

易丹

Liao Wen (b.08/1961) Female art critic from Beijing. 1984 graduated from Beijing Normal University Chinese department with an M.A. Worked as an editor of the *Zhongguo Meishubao* in the eighties.

廖雯

Cao Xiaodong (b1961) From Guanyun, Jiangsu. 1982 graduated from the applied arts department of Wuxi Light Industry College and was assigned to work in Changzhou. (Gao Minglu:147)

曹晓冬

Song Ling (b.1961) From Hangzhou. 1984 graduated from the ZAFa *guohua* department and was assigned to the Zhejiang Huayuan. (Gao Minglu:154)

宋陵

Zhang Ling (b1961) 1984 admitted to the art dept. of Huadong University. One of the organisers of the South West Art Research Group.(Gao Minglu:255)

张隆

Geng Jianyi (08/1962) Born in Henan, Zhengzhou. 1985 graduated from the ZAFa oil painting department. Now teaches at the Zhejiang College of Silk Processing. Participated in the "New Space '85 Exhibition" Hangzhou 1985; The activities of the Pond Society 1986/7; China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993; China Avant-garde Exhibition, Berlin 1993. (BRZ:96)

耿建翌

He Kun (09/1962) Born in Simao, Yunnan Province. 1980 graduated from the Simao Normal Zhuanke Xuexiao art department. Participated in the Manka-Five man Exhibition, Kunming 1986. Self-employed artist in Simao. 7 NAE silver award. (RML:1059)

贺昆

Liu Dahong (09/1962) From Qingdao, Shandong Province. 1981 graduated from the Shandong Art Academy. 1985 graduated From the ZAFa, oil painting department. Now teaches at the Shanghai Normal University. Participated in "China's New Art, Post 1989" (BRZ:110)

刘大鸿

Meng Luding (08/12/1962) Born in Baoding, Hebei. 1983 graduated from CAFA middle school. Admitted to CAFA oil painting dept. 1987 graduated and remained as teacher. Participated in AYCA exhibition and China/Avant-garde exhibition, Beijing. (NJ:950)

孟禄丁

Wang Huaxiang (b.1962) From Qingzhen County Guizhou. 1977 entered Guizhou Provincial Art School (Yixiao). 1984 admitted to the CAFA print dept. and has taught there since graduating. Participated in the First National Ethnic Minorities exhibition and won gold award at 6NAE. (RML:1025)
王华祥

Lü Min (b.1962) Woman artist From Yunnan. 1986 graduated from Yunnan Art Academy print dept. Works in Kunming. Participated in 9th National Print exhibition (RML:1047)
吕敏

Tang Song (b.1962) From Hangzhou. 1989 graduated from ZAFA. Participated in China/Avant-Garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989"
唐宋

Xiao Lu (b.1962) From Hangzhou. 1988 graduated from ZAFA. Participated in China/Avant-Garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989".
肖鲁

Fang Lijun (b.1963) Born in Handan, Hebei Province. 1989 graduated from the print department of the CAFA. Participated in the China/Avant-Garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989, Hong Kong 1993; China Avant-garde, Berlin 1993; Venice Biennale. (BRZ:150)
方力均

Ni Haifeng (01/1964) From Zhoushan, Zhejiang. 1986 graduated from ZAFA oil painting dept. MA. Teacher at Zhoushan Shifan Zhuanke Xuexiao. Participated in 1985 "Red. Black. White." exhibition. Zhuhai Slide exhib. 1985. "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993
倪海峰

Sheng Qi (14/11/1965) From Anhui. Graduated from the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts. Performance artist. Participated in the Concept 21 Action Art event 1986 as well as in the subsequent events of the Concept 21 group. Also performed in The Great Earthquake film by Wen Pulin.
盛大奇

Liu Wei (b.1965) From Beijing. 1989 graduated from the print department of the CAFA. Participated in "China's New Art, Post 1989", Hong Kong 1993; Venice Biennale; Sao Paulo Biennale. Self-employed artist. (BRZ:152)
刘伟

Yang Shu (11/1965) From Chongqing, Sichuan Province. 1988 graduated from the Sichuan Art Academy, oil painting dept. Was kept on as a teacher. Participated in South West Modern Art Exhibition, 1988; China/Avant-garde Exhibition, Beijing 1989. (BRZ:142)
杨述

Song Yonghong (10/1966) From Hebei. 1988 graduated from the ZAFA print department. Now teaches at the Beijing Arts and crafts College (Gongyi Meishu Xuexiao). Participated in the "Second Shanxi Modern Art Exhibition" 1988; the "China/Avant-garde Exhibition" 1989; "China's New Art, Post 1989, Hong Kong 1993. (BRZ:156)
宋永红

d.o.b. unknown

Fan Jingzhong 1979-1981 art theory research student at ZAFA

范景中

Fei Dawei. Art theorist. Active 1980s

费大为

Gu Zhenyu. Art theorist. Active 1980s

顾征宇

Liu Yukang Participated in the 6 NAE

刘宇廉

Luo Zhengyou Yi nationality. Participated in 1977 South West Minority Artists Exhibition.

罗正友

Maro Mujia Yi Nationality from Sichuan. Collective work won award at 6NAE

马麓木甲

Muna Yitie Yi Nationality from Sichuan. Collective work won award at 6NAE

木乃衣铁

Ren Rong. From Jiangsu. Active in 1980s

任戎

Shao Hong Active in 1980s. Collaborated on articles with Yang Xiaoyan

邵宏

Sun Jin (45 y.o. in 1998?) 1988 graduated from Beijing Normal University Chinese dept. PhD. Now teaches at the sociology dept of China Agricultural Univ.

孙津

Wang Deren "Vagabond" artist active in Beijing, late eighties

王德仁

Wang Luxiang. Active in 1980s

王鲁豫

Wen Pulin Film-maker. Director of The Great Earthquake

温普林

Wu Guangyao. Action artist. Performed at Beijing University 1986

(吴)广曜

Wu Mengfei Art educator in early modern China

吴梦非

Xi Jianjun Participated in Concept 21 Action art 1986. Now in London.

奚建军

Yu Qifan. Active in early 20th century

俞寄凡

Yu Xiang *Guohua* artist. Participated in the 6 NAE

余乡

Yuan Qingyi Participated in the AYCA Exhibition

袁庆一

Yuruo Yi Nationality from Sichuan. Collective work won award at 6NAE

郁蓊

Zhang Baoqi. Active in 1980s

张保琪

Zhang Qun Participated in the AYCA Exhibition

张君羊

Zhu Huiran peasant painter. Active in Great Leap Forward.

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Negotiating Culture

The Discourse of Art and the Position of the Artist in 1980s China

by Eduardo Welsh

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Hung, Chang-tai *War and Popular Culture. Resistance in Modern China 1937-1945* California 1994

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Midsummer Swimmers 仲夏的泳者
Jiangsu Huakan 9/1986

fig 5.16 Geng Jianyi 1985

Summer 1985, Yet Another Shaved Head 理发3号-1985年夏季的又一个光头
Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 5.17 Zhang Peili 1985 oil painting 180 x 130 cms

End Note 休止音符
Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 5.18 Bao Jianfei 1985 print

New Space 1 新空间 1
Jiangsu Huakan 9/1986

Illustrations

fig 5.19 Song Ling 1985 *guohua* 120 x 100 cms

People. Pipeline 人·管道

Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 5.20 Wang Qiang 1985 sculpture

5th Symphony, 2nd Movement, Beginning Adagio 第5交响乐第2乐章开头的柔板

Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 5.21 Shen Qin 1985 *guohua*

The Dream of Hua and Xia 华夏之梦

Jiangsu Huakan 2/1986

fig 5.22 Shen Qin 1985 *guohua*

Master and Disciple Dialogue 师徒的对话

Jiangsu Huakan 2/1986

fig 5.23 Cao Xiaodong 1985 oil painting

Work N° 1 作品一号

Jiangsu Huakan 2/1986

fig 5.24 Ding Fang 1985 oil painting

City Wall 城墙

Jiangsu Huakan 2/1986

fig 5.25 Yang Zhilin 1985 oil painting

People Evolved From Fish, People Like Eating Fish 人是鱼的进化-人喜欢吃鱼

Jiangsu Huakan 2/1986

fig 5.26 Wu Shanzhuan and the "Red Humour" group 1986 installation

70% Red, 25% Black, 5% White exhibition

Gao Minglu

fig 5.27 Wu Shanzhuan and the "Red Humour" group 1986 installation

70% Red, 25% Black, 5% White exhibition

Gao Minglu

fig 5.28 Wu Shanzhuan circa 1986 photograph

No Water This Afternoon 下午停水

photograph supplied by Zhang Jie

fig 5.29 Zhang Peili 1987 oil painting 180 x 200 cms

X ?

Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 5.30 Zhang Peili 1988 video 180 mins

30 x 30

Lu Peng and Yi Dan

Chapter 6

fig 6.01 Huang Zhen undated drawing

Yi Guide

China Pictorial 11/1962

fig 6.02 Zhan Jianjun 1957 oil painting 350 x 180 cms

New Settlers on Virgin Lands 起家

Zhan Jianjun Huaji

6.03 Niu Wen 1956 woodcut print 46 x 26.5 cms

A Tibetan Peasant Family 藏族農家

Niu Wen Huaji

6.04 Li Huanmin 1963 woodcut print 54.2 x 49 cms

Along the Golden Path 初踏黃金路

Li Huanmin Huaji

6.05 Chen Zizhuang *guohua*

The Longquan Landscape Album 龍泉山水冊

Guohua 4/1988

6.06 Li Huasheng 1982 *guohua* 136 x 68.5 cms

Painting After Lu You's Poem

Contradictions

6.07 Liu Shaohui 1979 illustration 27 x 22 cms

Zhao Shutun 召樹屯

Meishu 5/1980

6.08 Chen Zhichuan 1980 gouache

June Snow 六月雪

Meishu Yanjiu 1/1981

6.09 Liu Ziming 1981 oil painting 92x 65cms

Scenery in Dali 大理風景

Meishu 12/1981

fig 6.10 Wang Jinyuan 1984 *guohua* 178 x 143 cms

Dancing Dragon and Snake 舞龍蛇

The 6th National Art Exhibition Prize-winning Works

Illustrations

fig 6.11 Jiang Tiefeng 1981 heavy colour painting 105 x 105 cms

Jiangnan Spring 江南春

Meishu 11/1981

fig 6.12 Zeng Xiaofeng 1980 oil painting 160 x 144 cms

On the Mountain Peak 在高山之巅

Meishu 3/1981

fig 6.13 Zhou Chunya

The New Generation of Tibetans 藏族新一代

New Realistic Painting

fig 6.14 Zhang Xiaogang 1981 oil painting 67 x 117 cms

Clouds in the Sky 天上的云

Meishu

fig 6.15 Chen Chonglin 1984 oil painting 72 x 103cms

Brother and Sister 姐弟

New Realistic Painting

fig 6.16 Gao Xiaohua 1983 oil painting 80 x 115 cms

Early Spring, Old Forest

New Realistic Painting

fig 6.17 Hao Ping 1983 woodcut print 45 x 44.5 cms

The Sound of Mortar and Pestle 碓声冬冬

8th National Woodcut Print Exhibition

fig 6.18 Zheng Xu 1984 woodcut print 72 x 64 cms

People of Lahu Nationality 拉祜风情

The 6th National Art Exhibition Prize-winning Works

fig 6.19 He Kun 1986 woodcut print 51 x 61 cms

Flowing Light 流动的光

Banhua Yishu no21(5/1987)

fig 6.20 Wei Qicong 1986 woodcut print

Autumn Evening II 秋夜之殇

Banhua Yishu no23

fig 6.21 Tian Shixin 1982 sculpture 93 cms high

Miao Girl 苗女

Meishu 10/1982

Illustrations

fig 6.22 Pu Guochang 1985 carved and painted board 62 x 42 cms

Mountain Ghosts 山鬼

Meishu 12/1985

fig 6.23 Pu Guochang 1985 guohua

Returning to Her Home 回娘家

Guohua 3/1985

fig 6.24 He Kun guohua 68 x 134 cms

Mountain Children 山娃图

He Kun Huaji

fig 6.25 Ah Ge 1977 woodcut print

Chairman Hua and the Liberated Serfs, Hearts Linked Together 华主席和翻身农奴心连心

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.26 Qijia Dawa 1977 woodcut print

Liberated Serfs Have Aspirations 翻身农奴有志气

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.27 Yang Changkui, Wang Zhenzhong and Hu Bingxuan 1977 guohua

Night Never Falls on the Banks of the Wujiang River 乌江两岸不夜天

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.28 Long Qinglian 1977 guohua

Eulogy 赞歌

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.29 Luo Zhengyou 1977 woodcut print

Rage 怒火

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.30 Li Xiu 1977

Returning Home After Graduation 毕业归来

Meishu 4/1977

fig 6.31 Qijia Dawa 1965 print illustrations 28.5 x 21 cms

My Childhood, n°3 我的童年

Qijia Dawa Huaji Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992

fig 6.32 Qijia Dawa 1965 print illustrations 28.5 x 21 cms

My Childhood 我的童年

Qijia Dawa Huaji Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe 1992

Illustrations

fig 6.33 Renzhen Langjia, Nima Zeren, Yixi Zeren, Da Wa, Yixi Sangdan, Mei Dingkai, Chen Bingxi and Lu Shuming. 1982 *tangka* painting

Gesar of Ling 岭格萨尔王
Zhongguo Meishu 2/1985

6.34 Luosong Xiangqiu and Gesang Yixi 1986 *tangka* painting

Tangdong Jiebu 唐东杰布
Meishu 2/1987

fig 6.35 Wang Huaxiang 1978 woodcut print

The Scholar Tree 槐树
Meishu Yanjiu 4/1990

fig 6.36 Wang Huaxiang 1988 woodcut print

Herdsmen 牧人
Meishu Yanjiu 4/1990

fig 6.37 Zeng Xiaofeng 1984 coloured drawing 20 x 26 cms

Wa Men 佤族
Eduardo Welsh

fig 6.38 Zeng Xiaofeng 1990 acrylic on canvas 76 x 75 cms

Table 桌子
Hualang 38

fig 6.39 Mao Xuhui 1985 collage and gouache 72 x 95 cms

Listless Days 无聊的日子
Eduardo Welsh

fig 6.40 Mao Xuhui 1986 mixed media and collage 27.5 x 19 cms

David and Venus 大卫与维纳斯
Lu Peng and Yi Dan

fig 6.41 Ye Yongqing 1985 oil painting 60 x 50 cms

The City is a Machine Which Disposes of Human Waste 城市是一个处理人类排泄物的机器
E. Welsh

fig 6.42 Mao Xuhui 1987 oil painting 78 x 108 cms

Private Space, Blind Corner 私人空间、死角
E. Welsh

fig 6.43 Ye Yongqing 1988 oil painting 100 x 120 cms

The Pursued 追赶者
Huajia 9 (10/1988)

Illustrations

fig 6.44 Ma Yun 1988 oil painting 110 x 80 cms

Persons No 1 人物

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.45 Wang Falin 1988 oil painting 84 x 100 cms

Endless Ranks

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.46 Zhang Xiaogang 1988 oil painting

Love in Life and Death 生生息息之爱

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.47 Yang Shu 1988 oil painting 300 x 200 cms

The Puzzle of the Reader 读者的疑惑

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.48 He Duoling 1988 oil painting 100 x 120 cms

Holy Infant So Tender and Mild 亡童

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.49 Wang Yi 1988 oil painting 100 x 110 cms

Grey Scenery 灰色风景

Huajia 9 (10/1988)

fig 6.50 Mao Xuhui 1990 oil painting

Patriarch, The Big Sofa 家长

E. Welsh

fig 6.51 Mao Xuhui 1989 oil painting 76 x 53 cms

Patriarch 家长

E. Welsh

fig 6.52 Mao Xuhui 1990 oil painting 120 x 150 cms

Patriarch of an Ordinary Family 普通家庭里的家长

E. Welsh

Chapter 7

fig 7.01 photograph 1976

Copying Revolutionary Poems

China Pictorial 1/1977

fig 7.02 Municipal Food Company, Guangdong 1976 cartoon

Untitled (The Gang of Four)

Lynne Bundesen *China's Wallposter Cartoons*

fig 7.03 Wang Keping 1978 wood sculpture

Idol 偶像

The Stars Ten Years

fig 7.04 Yan Li 1978 oil painting

Dialogue 对话

Meishu

fig 7.05 Ma Desheng 1980 woodcut print

Six Square Metres 六平方米

Meishu

fig 7.06 Huang Rui circa 1980 oil painting

Untitled 世俗 - 秋

Meishu 1980/12

fig 7.07 Feng Guodong 1980 oil painting 120 x 408 cms

People At Ease 自在者

Meishu 2/1981

fig 7.08 Zhong Ming 1980 oil painting

He Is Himself - Sartre 他是他自己 - 萨特

Meishu 2/1981

fig 7.09 Guang Yao 1986 performance

Untitled 无题

Zhongguo Meishubao 3/1987

fig 7.10 Concept 21 Group 1986 performance

Zhongguo Meishubao 3/1987

fig 7.11 Liu Xun 1986 oil painting 70 x 82 cms

Withered Lotus 残荷

Liu Xun Huaji

7.12 Wei Qimei 1983 oil painting 178 x 90 cms

New Lines 新线

Zhongguo Meishubao not

7.13 Jin Shangyi 1884 oil painting 118 x 136 cms

Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白

The 6th National Art Exhibition Prize-winning Works.

7.14 Sun Weimin 1984 oil painting 140x 128 cms

The Twelfth Moon 蛸月

The 6th National Art Exhibition Prize-winning Works.

7.15 Xia Xiaowan 1988 oil painting 180 x 172 cms

Human Circle 人圈

Yushu Chaoliu

7.16 She Benming oil painting

Nirvana 涅槃

Zhongguo Meishubao

7.17 Ma Lu 1985 oil painting 82 x 82 cms

Equilibrium 均势

Meishu 2/1986

7.18 Zhang Furong circa 1988 oil painting

Dreamworld 梦的世界

Zhongguo Meishubao

7.19 Lu Shengzhong and Xu Bing exhibition

Lu Shengzhong Huaji

7.20 Xu Bing 1988 woodcut installation

Book of Heaven 天书

China Modern Art Exhibition Catalogue

7.21 Li Shan 1989 performance

Good Bye 再见

Jiangsu Huakan 4/1989

7.22 Wang Guangyi 1988 oil painting 148.5 x 120 cms

Mao Zedong - Red Grid 毛泽东 - 红格

Lu Peng & Yi Dan

7.23 Geng Jianyi 1988 oil painting

The Second State 第二状态

China Modern Art Exhibition Catalogue

7.24 Song Yonghong circa 1988 oil painting

No Ticket Collector 无人售票

Jiangsu Huakan 4/1989

7.25 Meng Luding 1988 oil painting

Untitled 3 无题

China Modern Art Exhibition Catalogue

Illustrations

7.26 Inflationist Group 1989 mixed media

Midnight Mass. The Last End of Century Trial 子夜的弥撒-最后的审判

Zhongguo Meishubao

7.27 Xiao Lu installation 1988

Dialogue 对话

China Avant-Garde Exhibition Catalogue

fig 7.29 Jia Youfu 1988 *guohua*

Wind 风

Jia Youfu Huaji

fig 7.30 Chen Ping circa 1987 *guohua*

Vision of My Hometown 家乡美景眼里画

Jiangsu Huakan..12/1987

fig 7.31 Wang Mengqi

Listening to Frogs 听取蛙声一片

Wang Mengqi Huaji

fig 7.32 photograph 1989

No U Turns Demonstration Group '不许调头'的标志的游行队伍

Zhongguo Meishubao 22/1989

fig 7.33 photograph 1989

Sculpture of True Courage 勇士塑像

Zhongguo Meishubao 22/1989

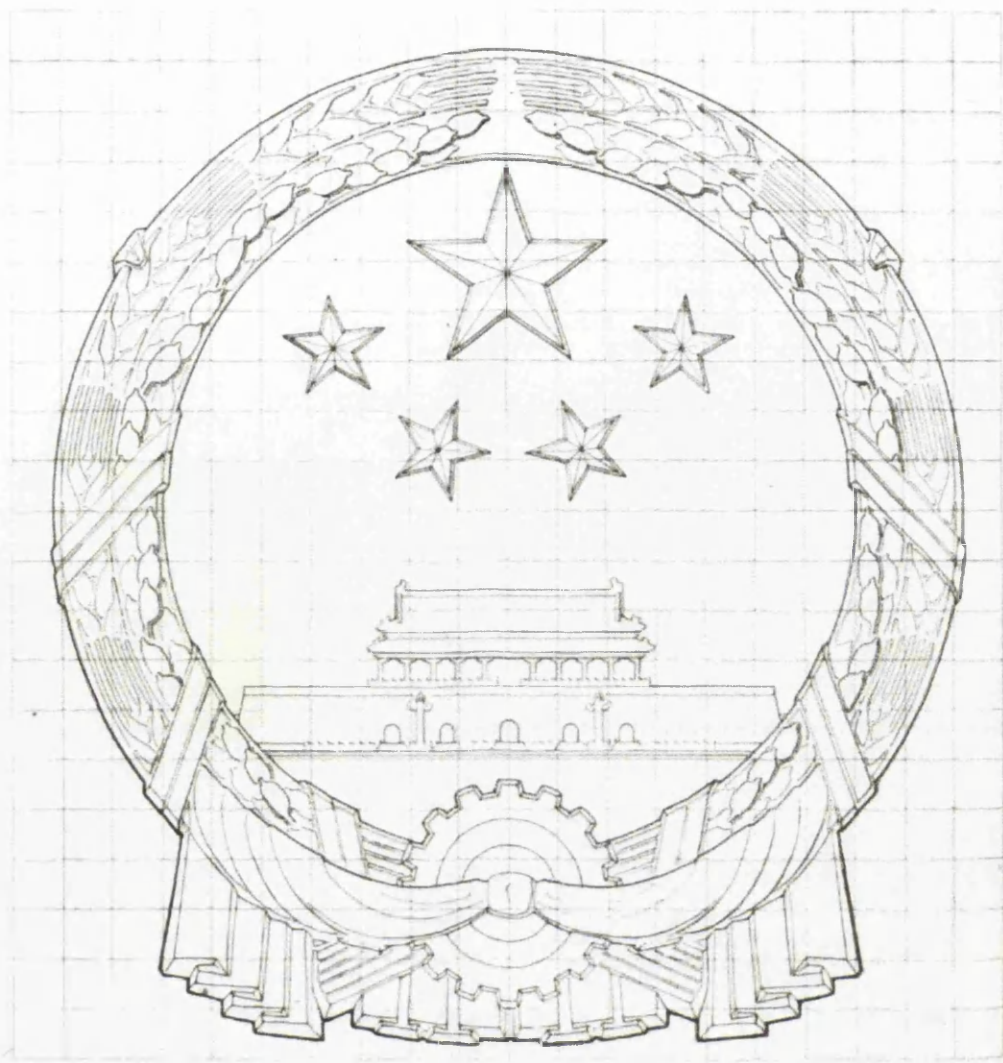


fig 1.01 National Emblem

fig 1.02 Dong Xiwen 1953 oil painting 230 x 410 cms
The Foundation of State

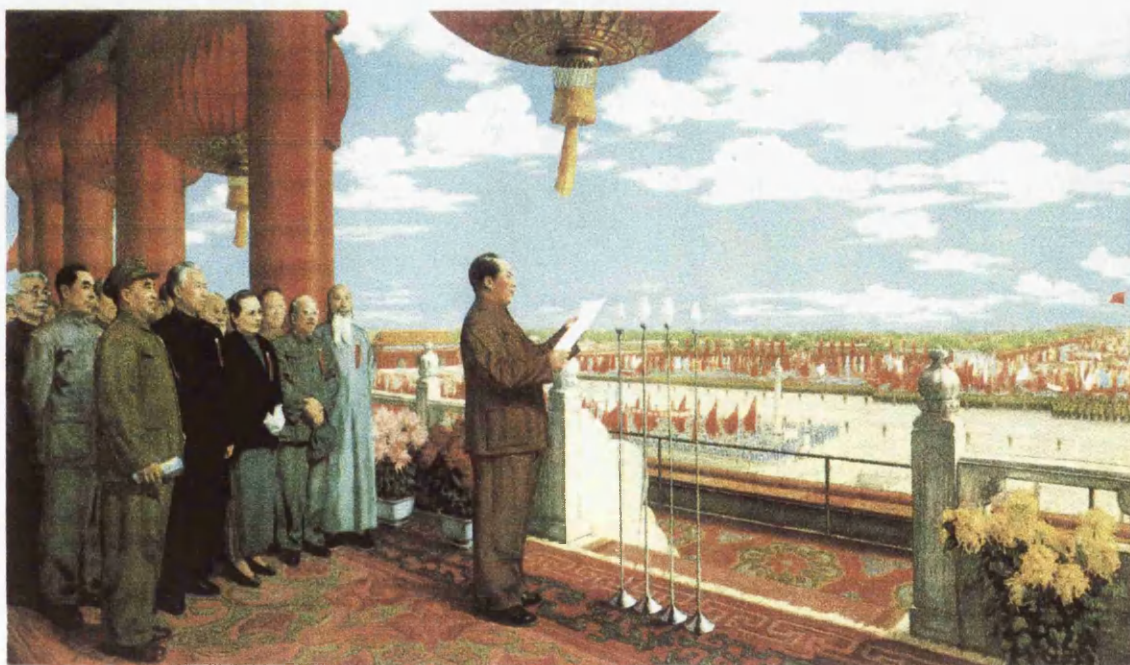




fig 2.01 Ren Bonian 1885 *guohua*
Zhao Dechang and his Wife

fig 2.02 Qi Baishi 1947 *guohua*
Mice





fig 2.03 Gao Jianfu 1932
guohua
Flying in the Rain

fig 2.04 Li Tiefu 1918
 oil painting
Musician

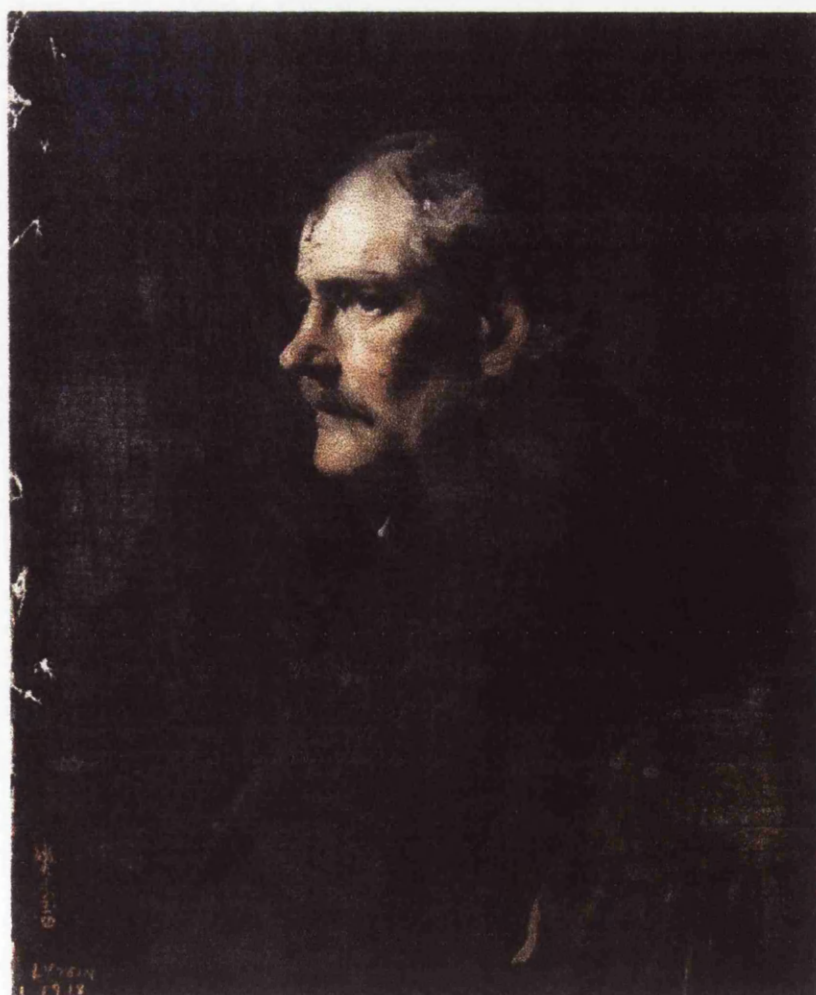




fig 2.05 Xu Beihong 1938 *guohua*
Self -Portrait

fig 2.06 Liu Haisu 1922 oil painting
Front Gate. Beijing





fig 2.07 Xu Beihong 1928 oil painting
Tian Heng Bidding Farewell to Five Hundred Warriors



fig 2.08 Lin Fengmian 1924 oil painting
Groping in the Dark



fig 2.09 Lin Fengmian *guohua*
Wild Goose in Solitary Flight

fig 2.10 Pang Xunqin circa 1930
The Riddle of Life



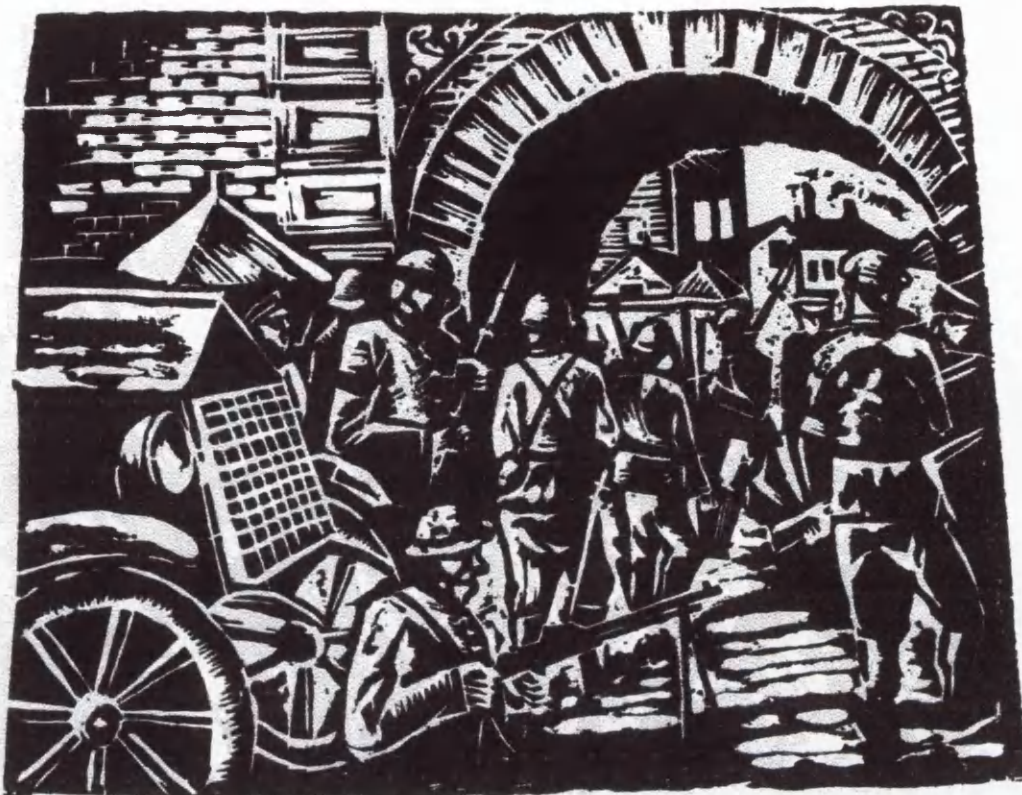


fig 2.11 Jiang Feng 1931 woodcut print
The Occupation of Shenyang by the Japanese Agressors, 18 September 1931



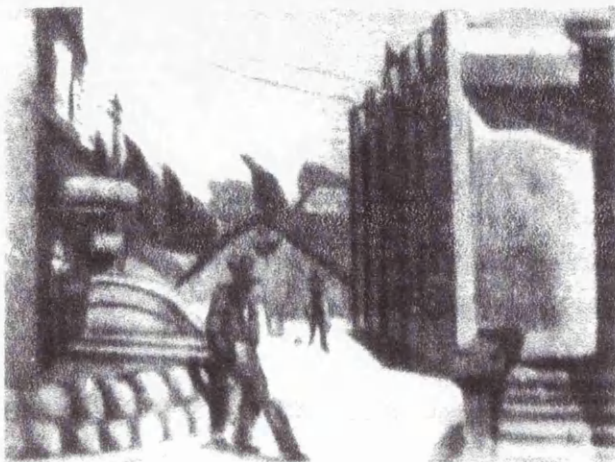
fig 2.12 Jiang Feng 1931 woodcut print
The People Who Demanded Resistance Against the Japanese Got Killed



fig 2.13 Xu Xingzhi 1924 oil painting
Evening Walk

fig 2.14 Xu Xingzhi 1935 oil painting
Unemployed

fig 2.15 Xu Xingzhi 1935 oil painting
Destitute





LEFT
fig 2.16 Li Hua 1934
White Horse

BELOW RIGHT
fig 2.17 Li Hua 1934
Interior With Nude



ABOVE
fig 2.18 Li Hua 1934 woodcut print
Deep in Thought



RIGHT
fig 2.19 Li Hua 1934 woodcut print
Still Life With Plant (Fingered Citron)





fig 2.20 Huang Xinbo 1947
oil painting
Seeds



fig 2.12 Huang Xinbo 1947
oil painting
The Returning Overseas
Compatriot



fig 2.22 Huang Xinbo 1950
oil painting
Little Girl



fig 2.23 Huang Xinbo 1951 oil painting First Time Out To Sea



fig 2.24 Pan Yuliang 1929 oil painting
Exuberant



fig 3.01 Pang Xunqin 1946 *guohua*
Huangguoshu Waterfall

fig 3.03 Zhuang Yan 1946
oil painting 26.5 x 18 cms
A Good Place, Shanbei



fig 3.02 Wu Zuoren 1946
oil painting 61 x 72.5 cms
Woman Carrying Water





fig 3.04 Situ Qiao 1940
oil painting 125 x 178 cms
Lay Down Your Whip

fig 3.06 Liu Xian 1938
woodcut print 13 x 12 cms
Consolidating Unity and
Fighting the Japanese
Agressors to the End

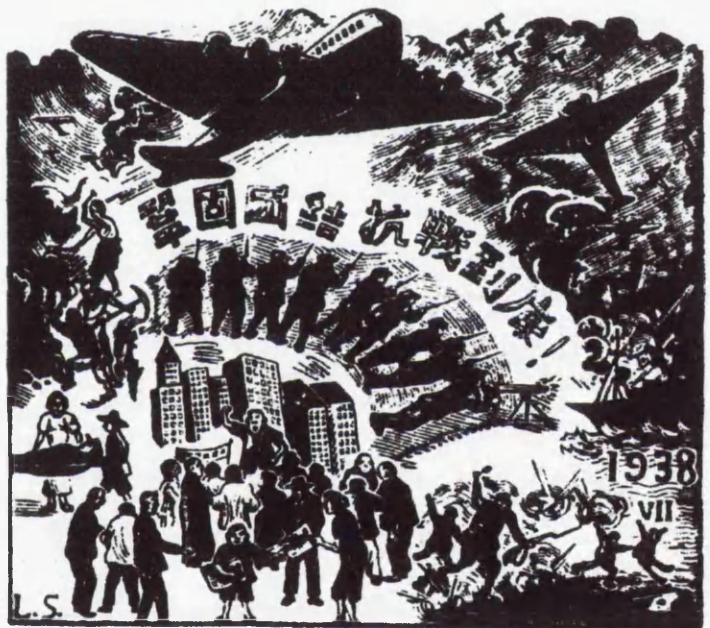


fig 3.05 Zhang Leping and
the cartoon propaganda team
mural painting 1938





fig 3.07 Huang Yuan 1941
woodcut print 37 x 17 cms
The Last Bullet



fig 3.08 Cai Ruohong 1937 cartoon
Surges of National Resistance

fig 3.09 Zhang Guangyu
1945 cartoon story
Journey to the West

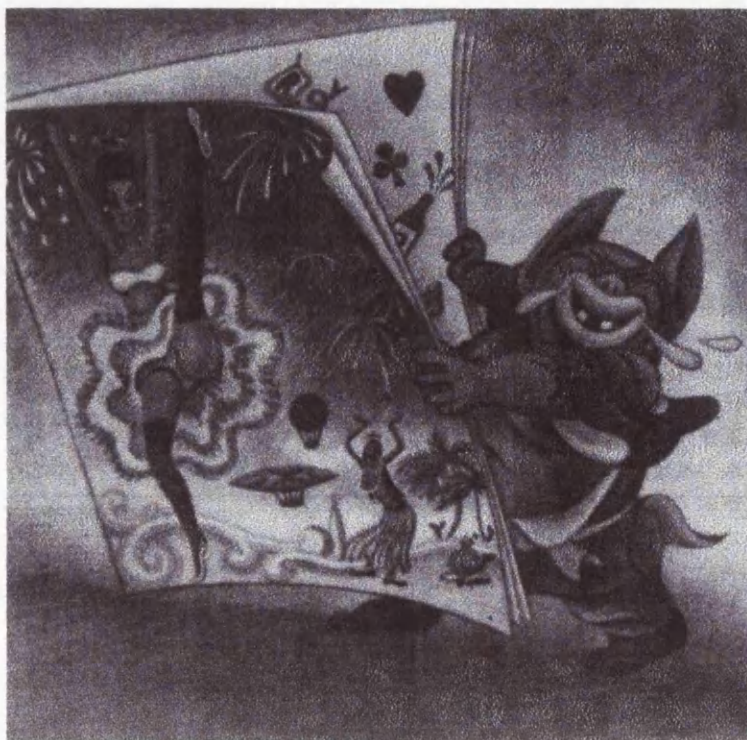




fig 3.10 Ye Qianyu 1949 *guohua*
The Liberation of Beijing



fig 3.11 Ye Qianyu 1930s cartoon
Mr Wang. Gambling Forbidden

fig 3.12 Feng Zikai
 1935 ink on paper
Cleaning the Ear





fig 3.13 Zhao Wangyun 1928 *guohua*
Tired

fig 3.14 Zhao Wangyun
circa 1933 ink wash
Countryside Sketches

(Below left)
Poems by Feng Yuxiang accompanying
Zhao Wangyun's pictures fig 3.14

“Wandering Cyclists on the Willow Road”

Ox carts are too slow	45 miles without needing a meal
Trains are not ordinary	Unfortunately our country can't make them
Pedal bikes	Still have to be bought from abroad
Really Convenient	Every year so much money goes abroad
Front wheel turns	Turning us into paupers
Back wheel turns	



“Creative Kiln and Kiln-workers in the Countryside Village”

What a great big kiln	For who are you firing?
Inside a real fire is burning	Green hall tiled house, we won't get to live there
The workers carry bricks	When will we be firing bricks for ourselves?
Try hard to run up the hill!	Then it will be interesting!
Hard work!	
Hard work!	



“Gathering Weeds”

After Autumn we go weeding
To heat up the cooking pot
Others use an electric stove
We still burn the weeds
How's that good?
How's that good?
If we don't change
we'll sink into poverty!



fig 3.15 Zhao Wangyun 1959
guohua 46 x 34 cms
Mountain Road (sketch 2)

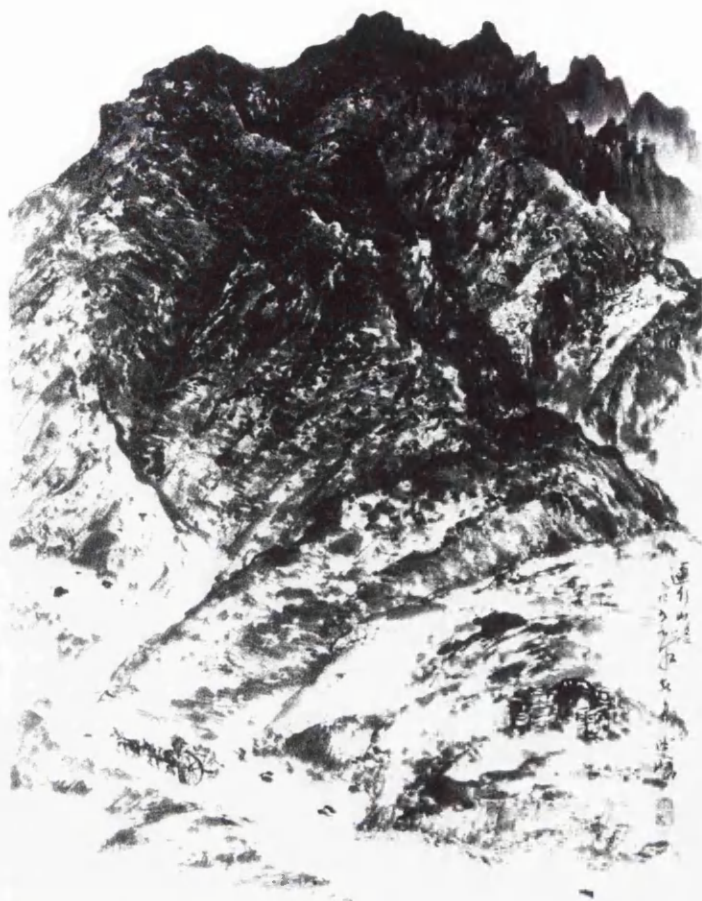


fig 3.16 Shi Lu 1960 guohua
Lu Cliff in My Memory

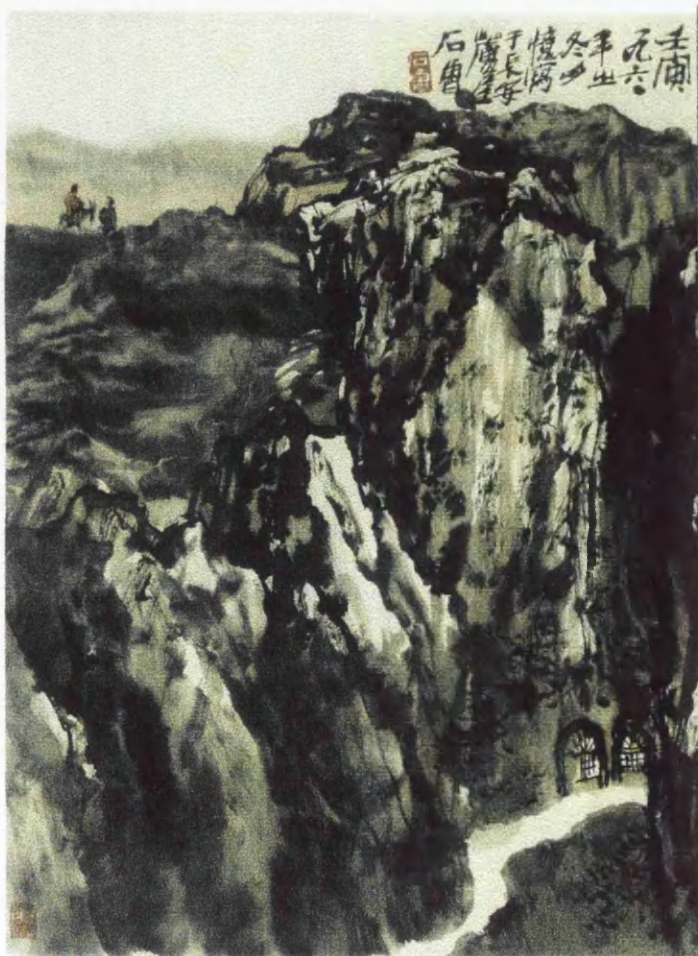


fig 3.17 Jiang Zhaohe 1953
guohua
Telling Uncle Our Grades



fig 3.18 Liu Wenxi 1962
guohua
Four Generations



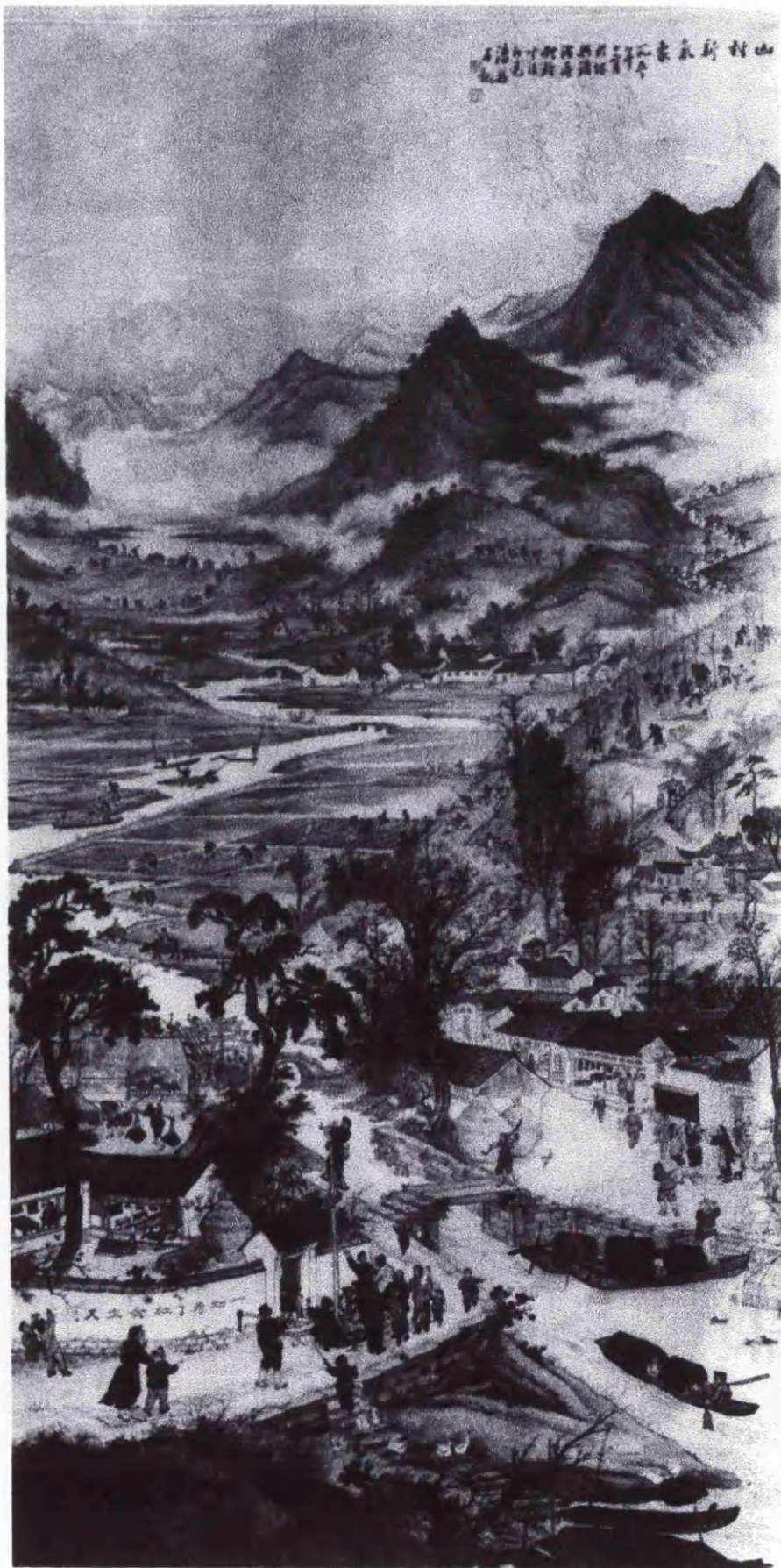


fig 3.19 Pan Yun 1955 *guohua* The New Appearance of the Mountain Village



LEFT
fig 3.20 Zhu Lesan undated *guohua* Turtle Dove and Peach Blossom



RIGHT
fig 3.21 Gu Kenbo 1954 *guohua* 42 x 116 cms Mi School Landscape

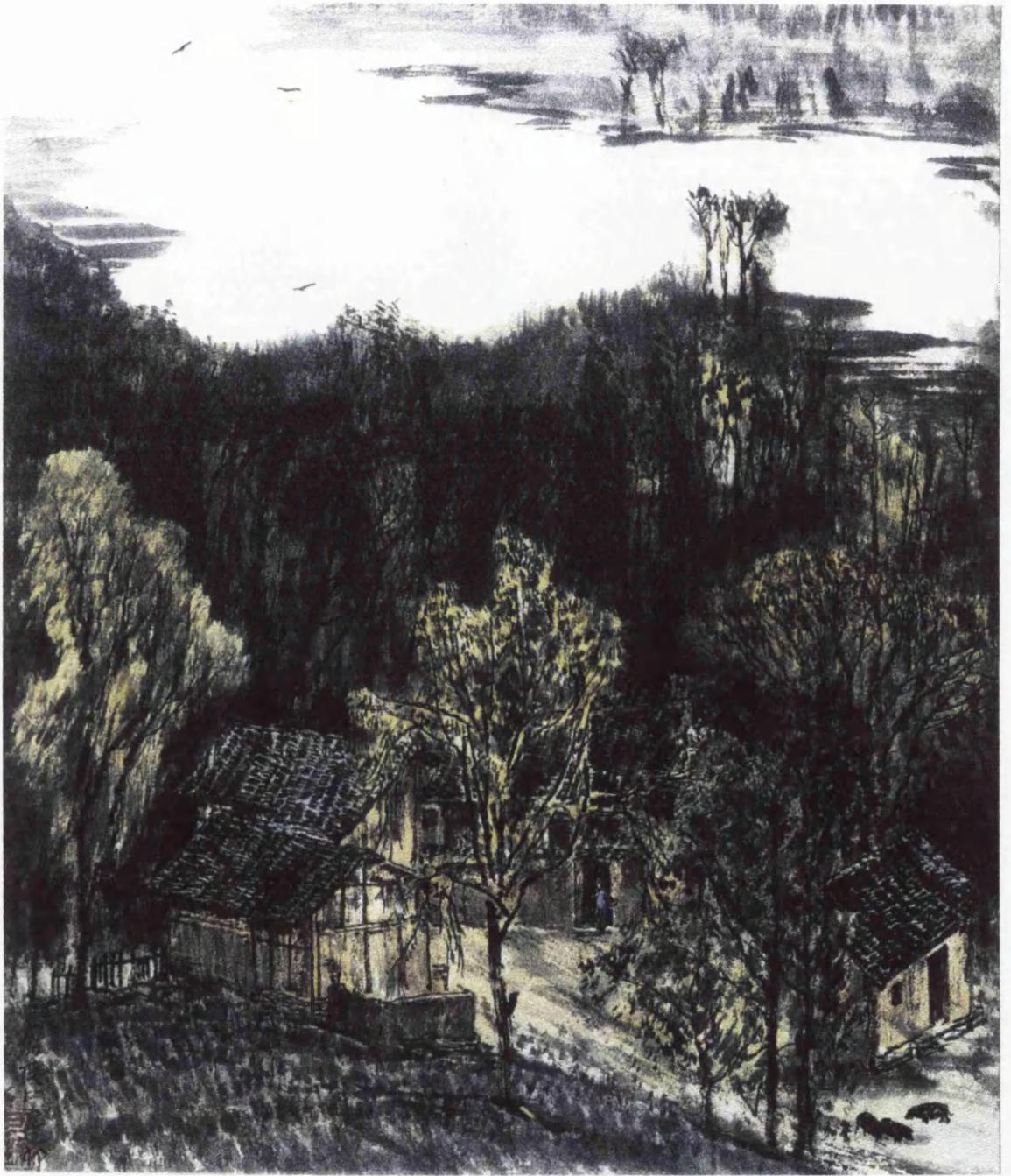


fig 3.22 Li Keran 1956 *guohua* 61 x 44 cms Rustic Cottages by the Jialing River



fig 3.23 Gu Kenbo 1959 *guohua* 60 x 65 cms Zhanqi Peak



fig 3.24 Gu Kenbo 1960 *guohua* 35 x 54 cms Plum Trees and Rocks



fig 3.25 Li Tianxiang 1950
picture draft 1
The Tragic Incident of Jiangyan



fig 3.26 Li Tianxiang 1950
picture draft 2
The Tragic Incident of Jiangyan

fig 3.27 Huang Jun 1950
new year picture
The Xinjiang Representative
Presents Gifts to Chairman Mao
at the People's Government
Consultative Conference





fig 3.28 Gu Yuan 1958 mural painting
photograph

fig 3.29 Pi county New Star society
1958 mural painting
Every Family raises Pigs

fig 3.30 Zhu Huiran 1958 peasant painting
Crossing the River in a Beanpod

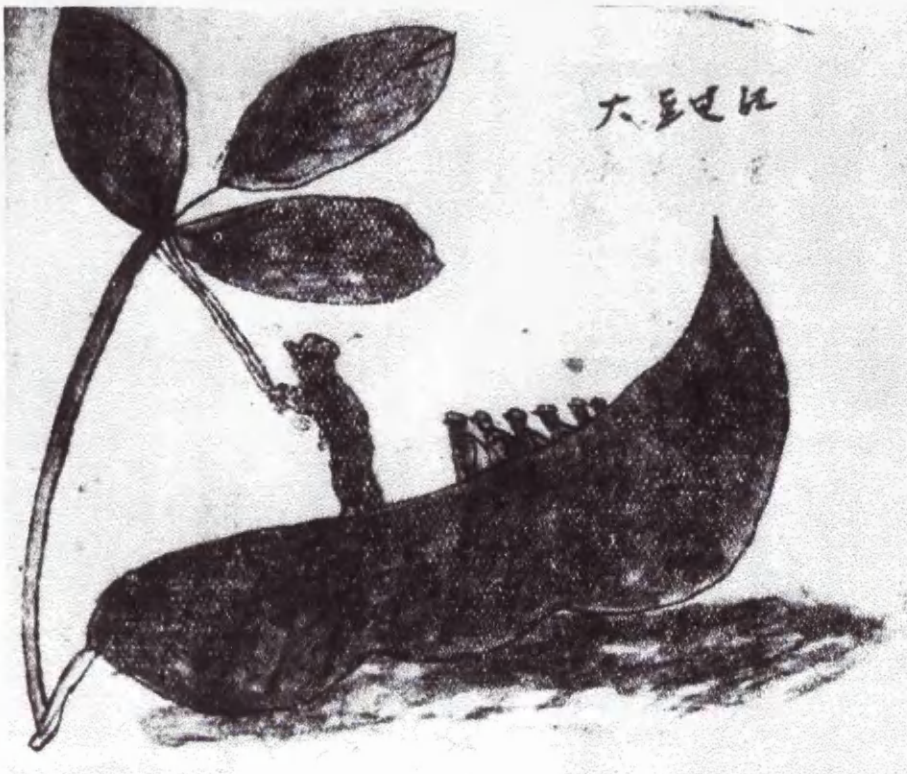




fig 3.31 Yang Wenxiu 1959 propaganda poster The Pigs Are Fatter, The Produce Is Greater

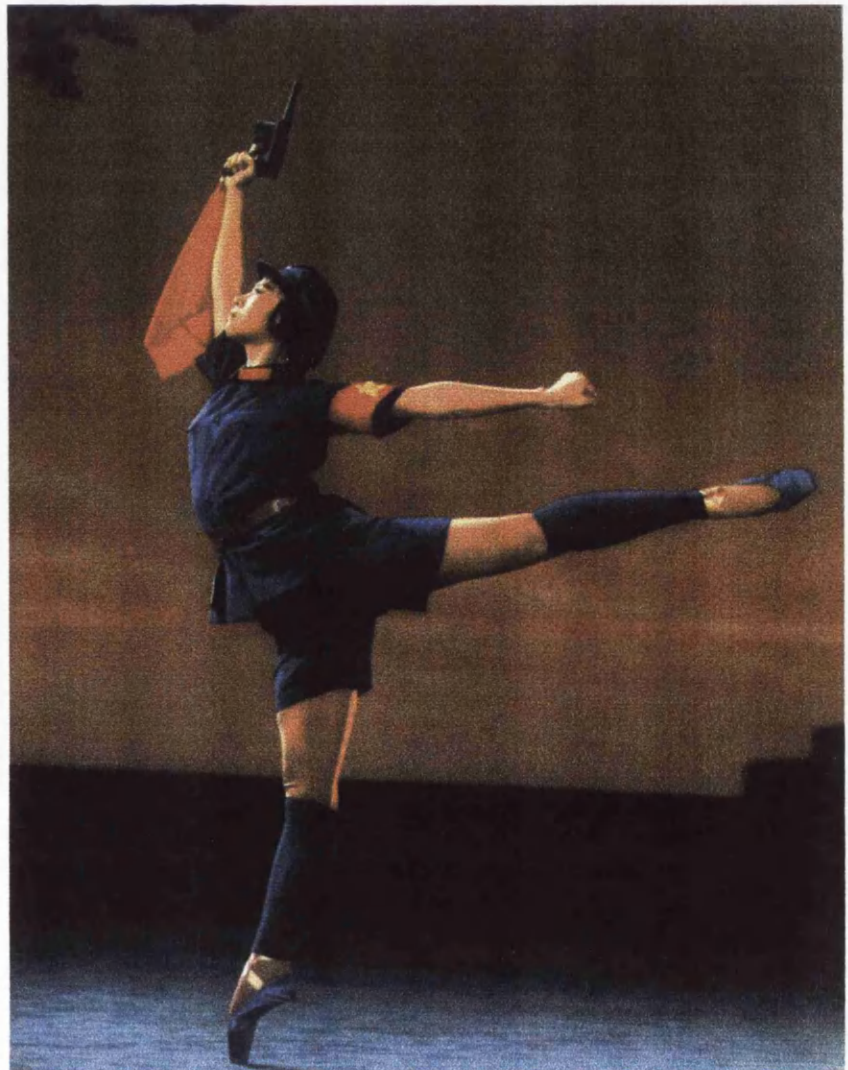


fig 3.32 New Model Opera The Red Detachment of Women Soldiers

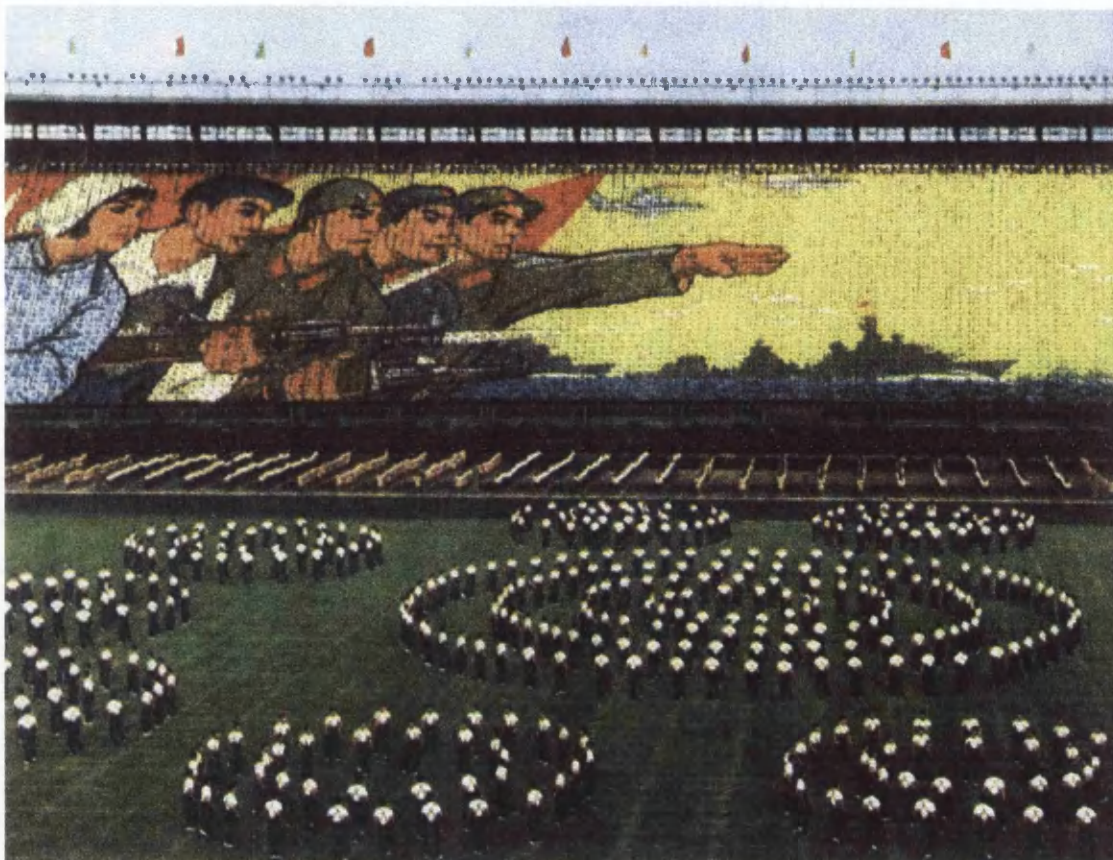


fig 3.33 Song in Praise of the Revolution 1965 Mass Callisthetics

"A pageant of mass callisthetics entitled Song in Praise of the Revolution was presented at the Second National Sports Meet by 16,000 people from 81 organizations. It was a lively display of exuberant health and gymnastic skill, proclaiming with vigour and finesse the great victory of Mao Tse-tung's thinking. The audience was enthralled from beginning to end." ("Song in Praise of the Revolution" *China Pictorial* 12/1965)



fig 3.34 Tongji University "East is Red" Unit 1967 poster Struggle For Victories in Spring Ploughing and Cultivation



fig 3.35 & 3.36 Anonymous 1967 cartoon
A Heroic Collective Armed With Mao Zedong Thought

4. The enemy planes are still strafing. The boat is about to sink. But the crew is calm and united like steel. They help each other to put on life-jackets and one after another jump into the sea. Radio-man Huang Wei-chao dashes from his room, holding high a little red book, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung*. The brilliance of the treasured book lights up the path of advance for the heroes.

6. Political Commissar Chen Yung-shang is the last to leave the boat. Standing on the slanting deck he records the U.S. imperialists' blood-debt to the Chinese people and writes a magnificent poem of China's sons' and daughters' fight to the finish against the enemy.

fig 3.37 photograph
 1967

"Before the statue of Liu Hu-lan. Young Pioneers pledge to carry on her revolutionary spirit and to become worthy successors to the cause of the proletarian revolution"

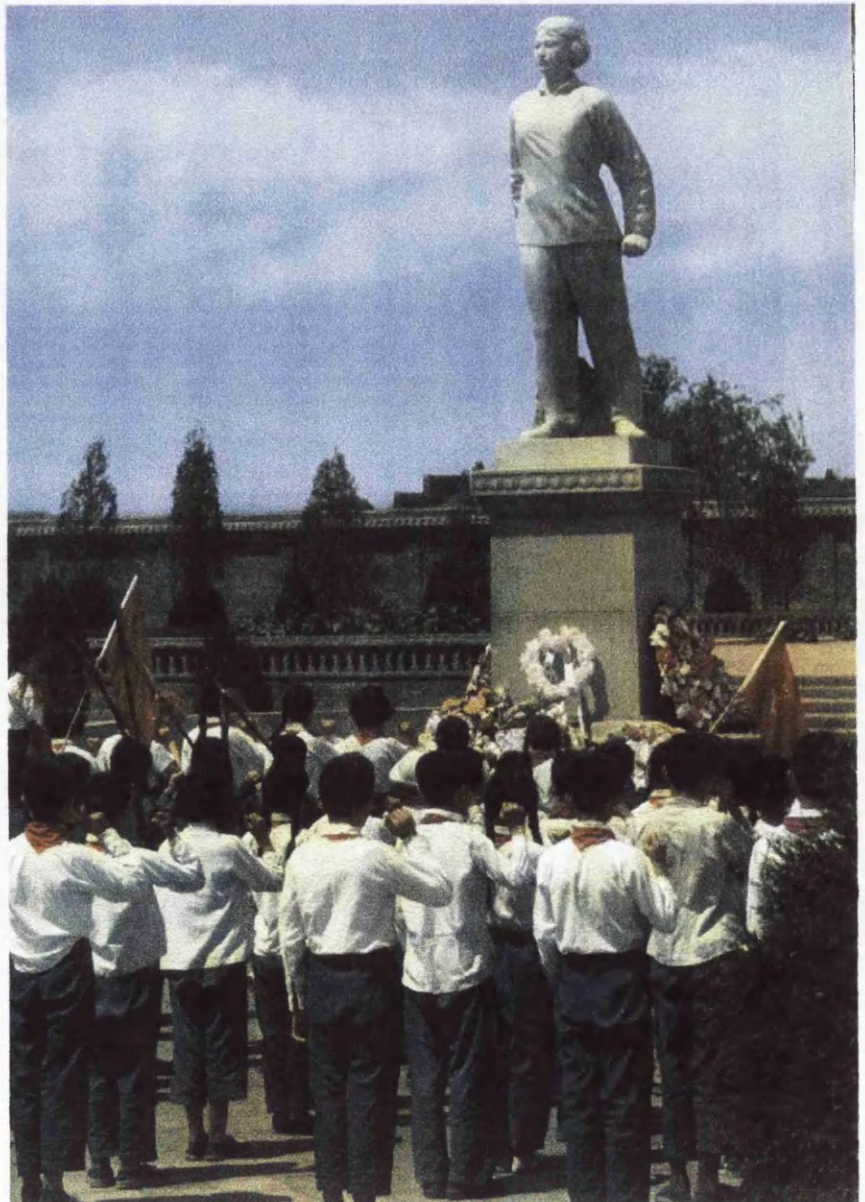




fig 3.38 photograph 1967

"Never forget class bitterness, bear in mind the hatred born of blood and tears! Open fire fiercely at the top Party person in authority taking the capitalist road!"



fig 3.39 photograph 1967

"Pens are the weapons. Cartoons and big character posters are the bullets fired at the bourgeois headquarters"



fig 4.01 Yuan Yunsheng 1979 mural The Water-splashing Festival - Song of Life



fig 4.02 Chen Danqing 1980 oil painting Pilgrimage

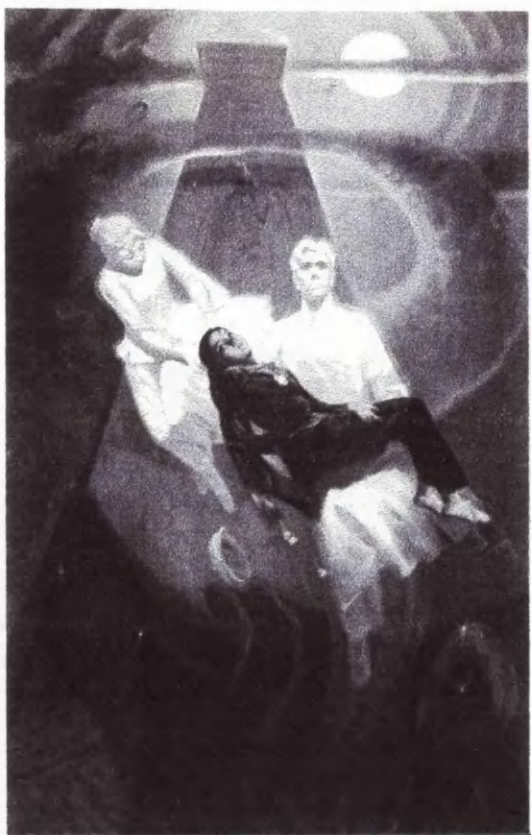


fig 4.03 Luo Zhongli 1979
oil painting
Song of the Loyal Ghost



fig 4.04 Zhang Guilin 1979
woodcut print
Where is the Party?

fig 4.05 Guo Changxin 1979
woodcut print
Untitled





fig 4.06 Chen Chonglin 1979
oil painting 202 x 300 cms
Snow, day X, month X, 1968

fig 4.07 Wang Hai 1979
oil painting 100 x 200 cms
Spring



fig 4.08 Luo Zhongli
1980 oil painting
240 x 160 cms
My Father



fig 4.09 Wang Chuan
1980 oil painting
80 x 150 cms
Goodbye Little Road



fig 4.10 Chen Yiming and
Liu Yukang 1979 strip cartoon
Feng

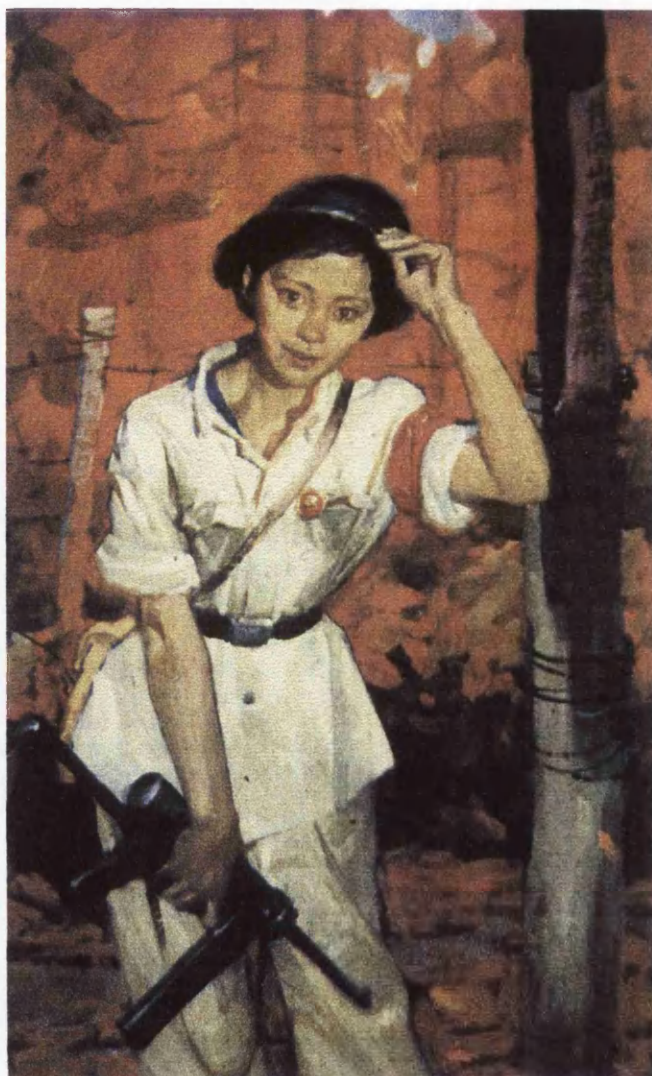


fig 4.11 Liao Bingxiong 1979
cartoon
Self-Mockery





fig 4.12 Fu Lin
1984 woodcut print
80 x 74 cms
The Pioneering Years

fig 4.13 Wang Jianwei
1984 oil painting
188 x 168 cms
To Dear Mother

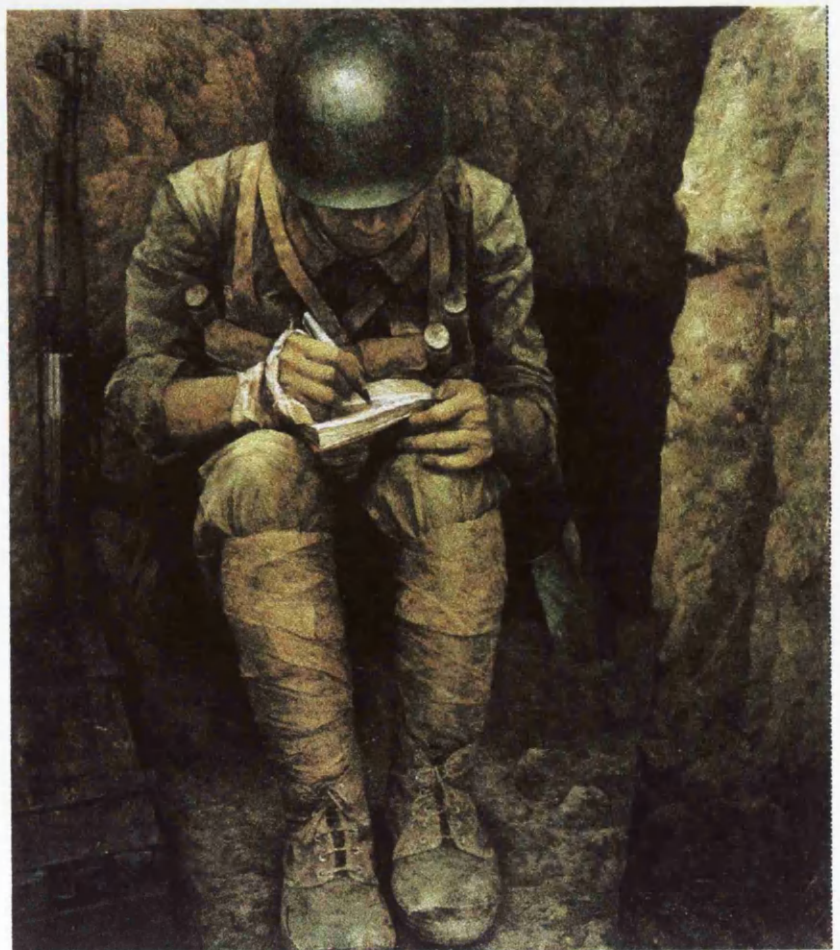




fig 4.14 Zhu Yiyong 1981 oil painting 112 x 141cms Small Village Shop

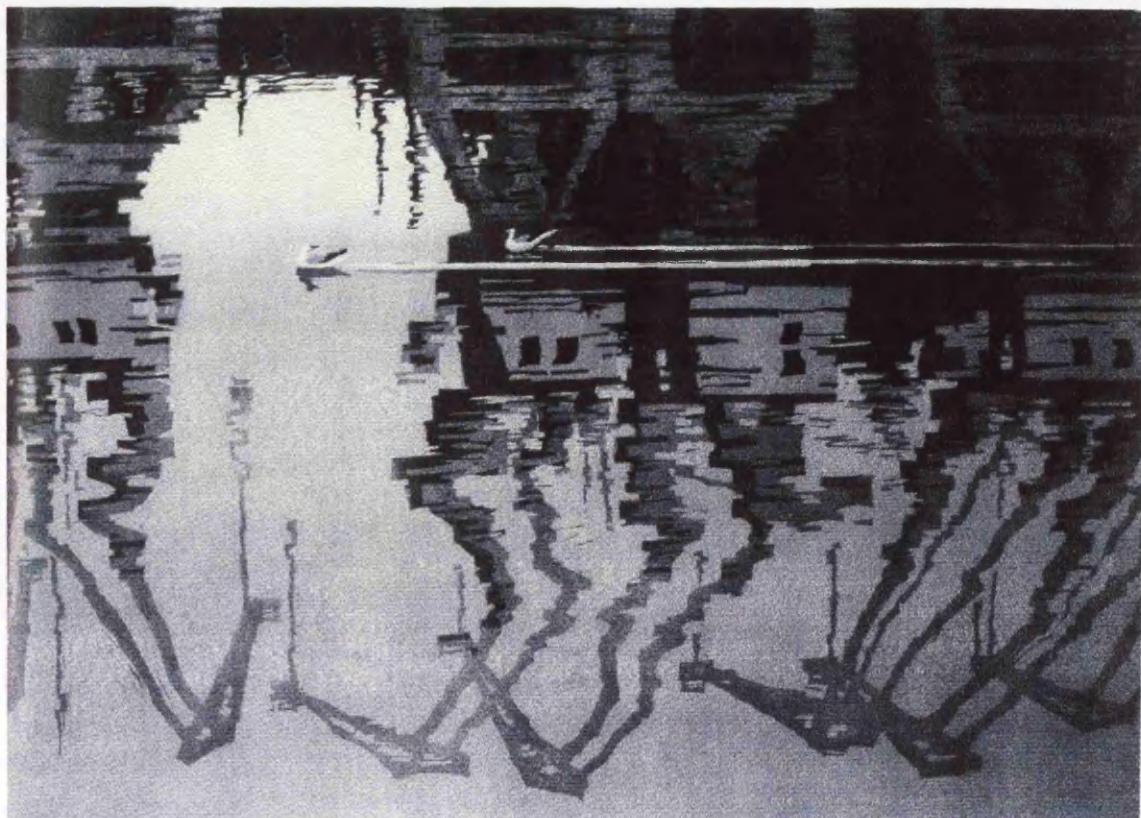
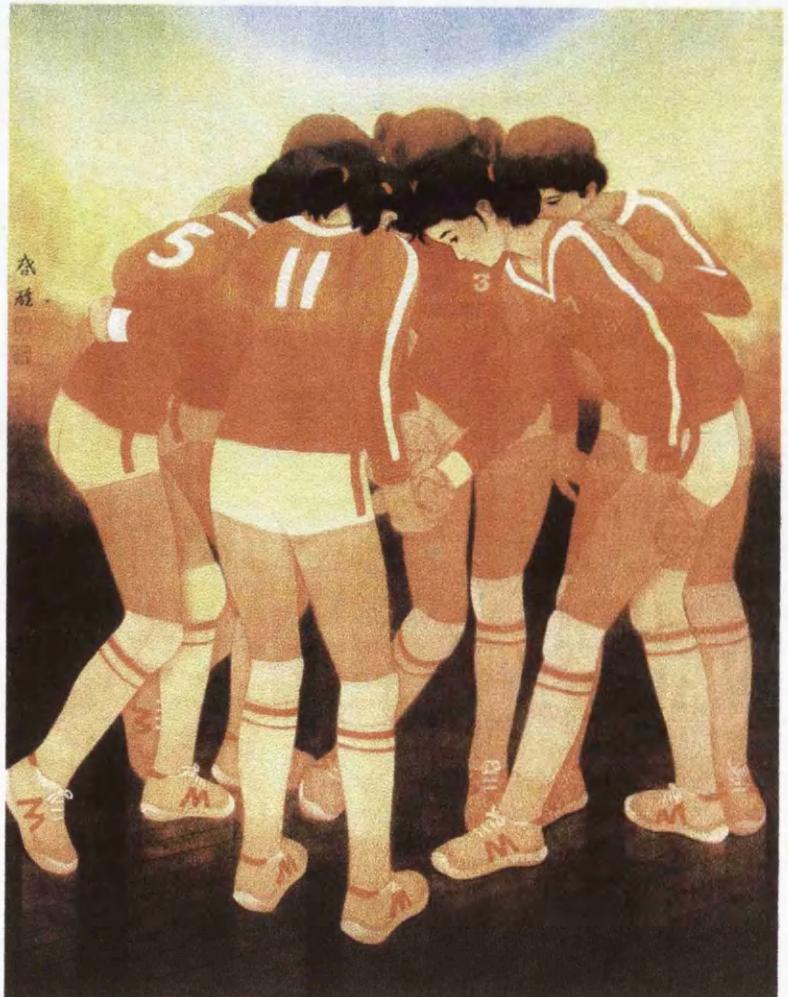


fig 4.15 Zhao Haipeng 1984 woodcut 79 x 60 cms Quiet Dawn



fig 4.16 Yu Xiang 1984
guohua 154 x 188 cms
Early Spring

fig 4.17 Yu Qixiong 1984
guohua 105 x 80 cms
Before the Finals



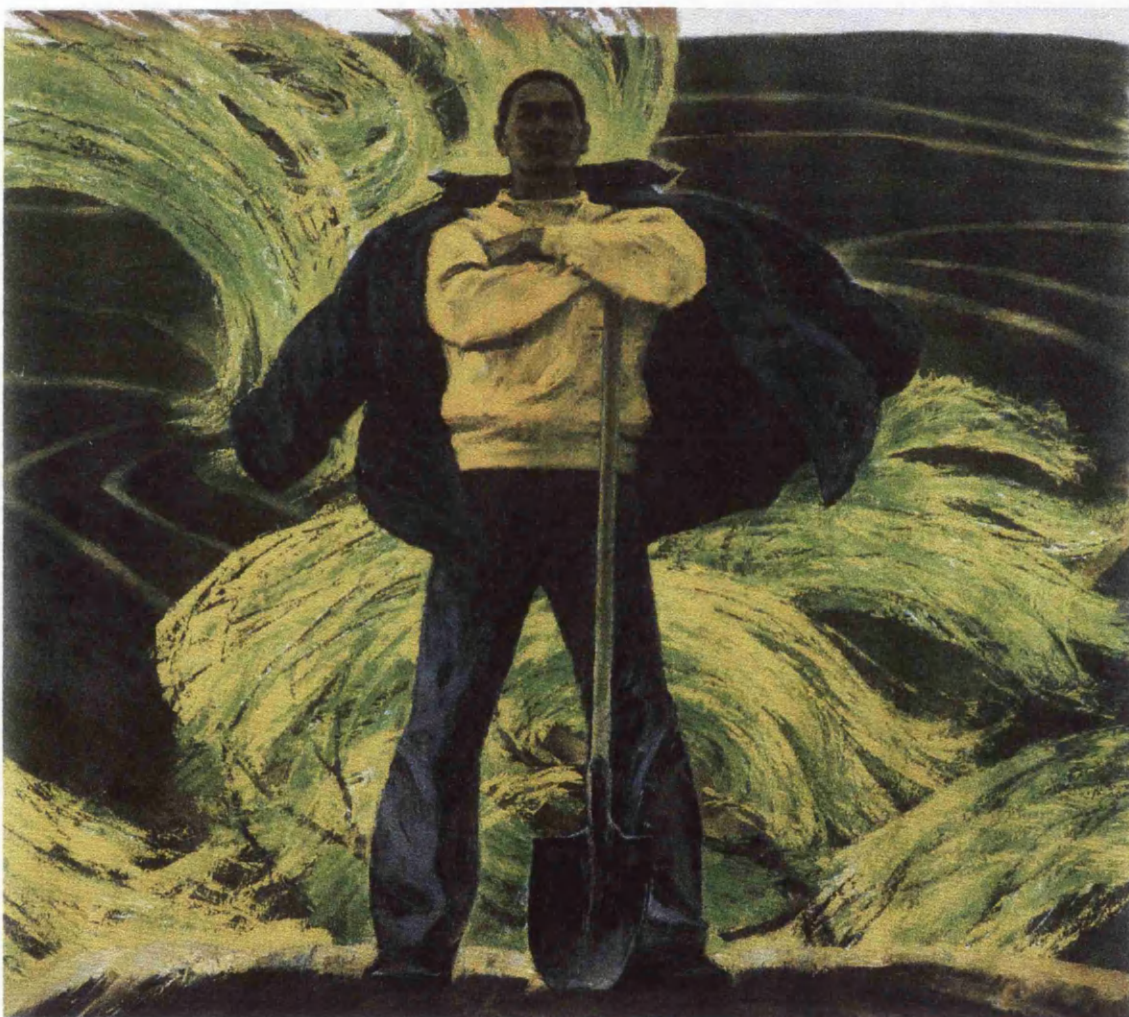


fig 4.18 Zhan Jianjun 1984 oil painting 197 x 177 cms Tide

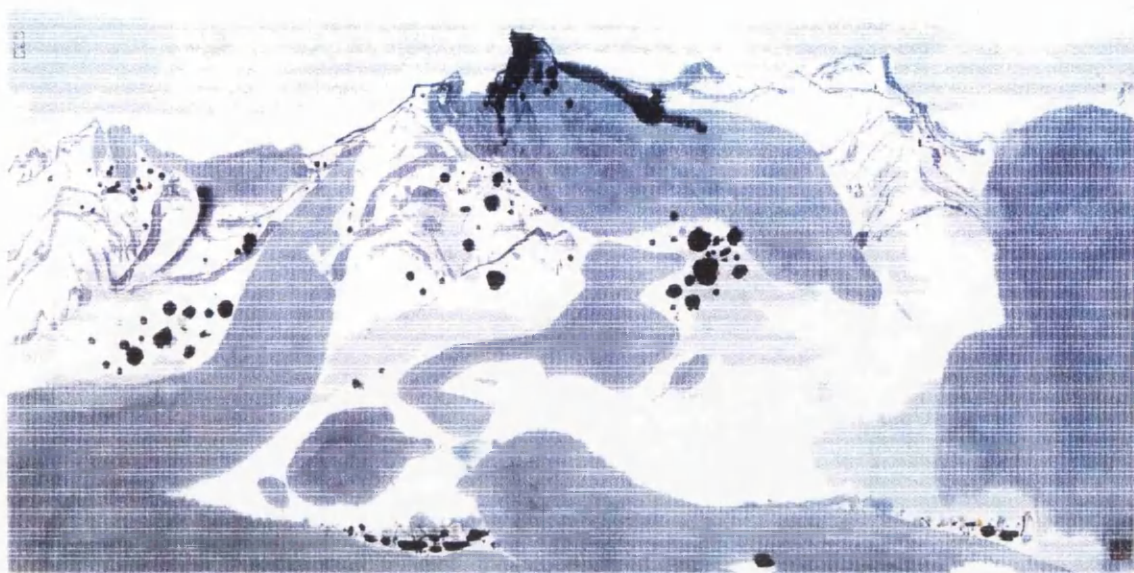


fig 4.19 Wu Guanzhong 1984 *guohua* 137 x 169 cms
Spring Snow



fig 4.20 Cai Qiliang 1984 *guohua* 100 x 90 cms
A Break of Affection



fig 4.21 Kelimu Nasirding 1984 oil painting 179 x 183 cms
Dance

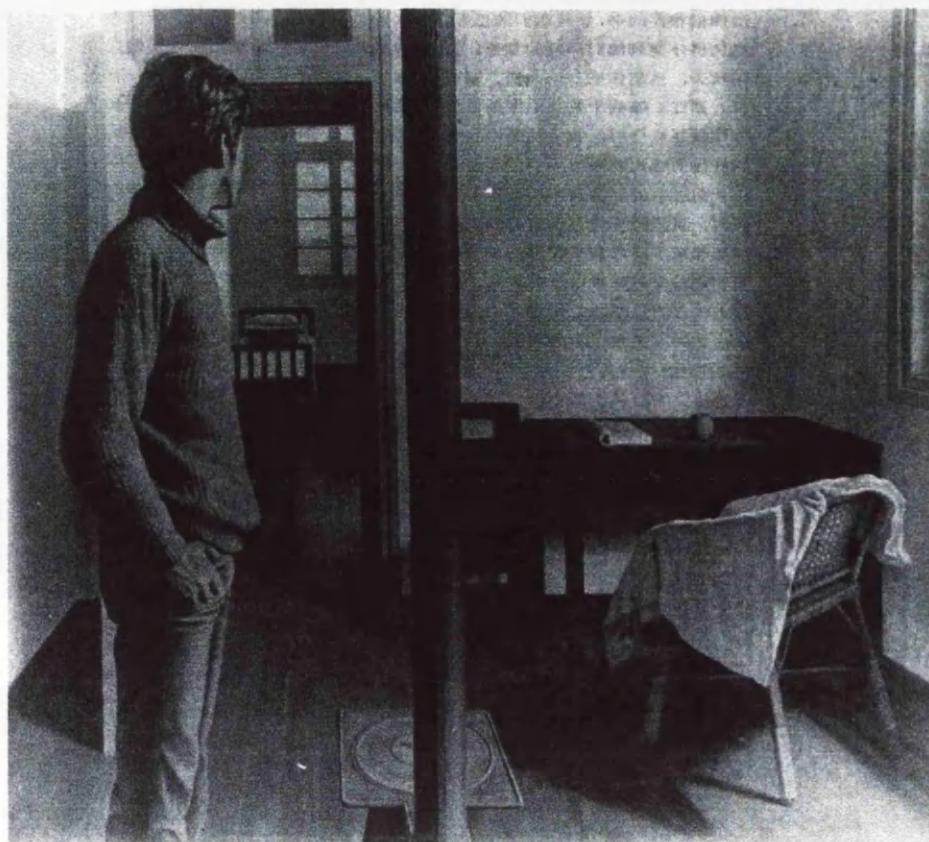


fig 4.22 Maromujia (Yi), Munayitie (Yi), Yuruo (Yi), Wang Yaoxian, Zhang Huawen,
Tang Shaoxi, Qian Laizhong & He Chonglin
1984 mural 58 x 180 cms
Among the Liangshan Mountains

fig 4.23 Zhang Jun 1985
mixed media 118 x 88cms
April 5th 1976



fig 4.24 Yuan Qingyi 1985
guohua
Spring Has Arrived



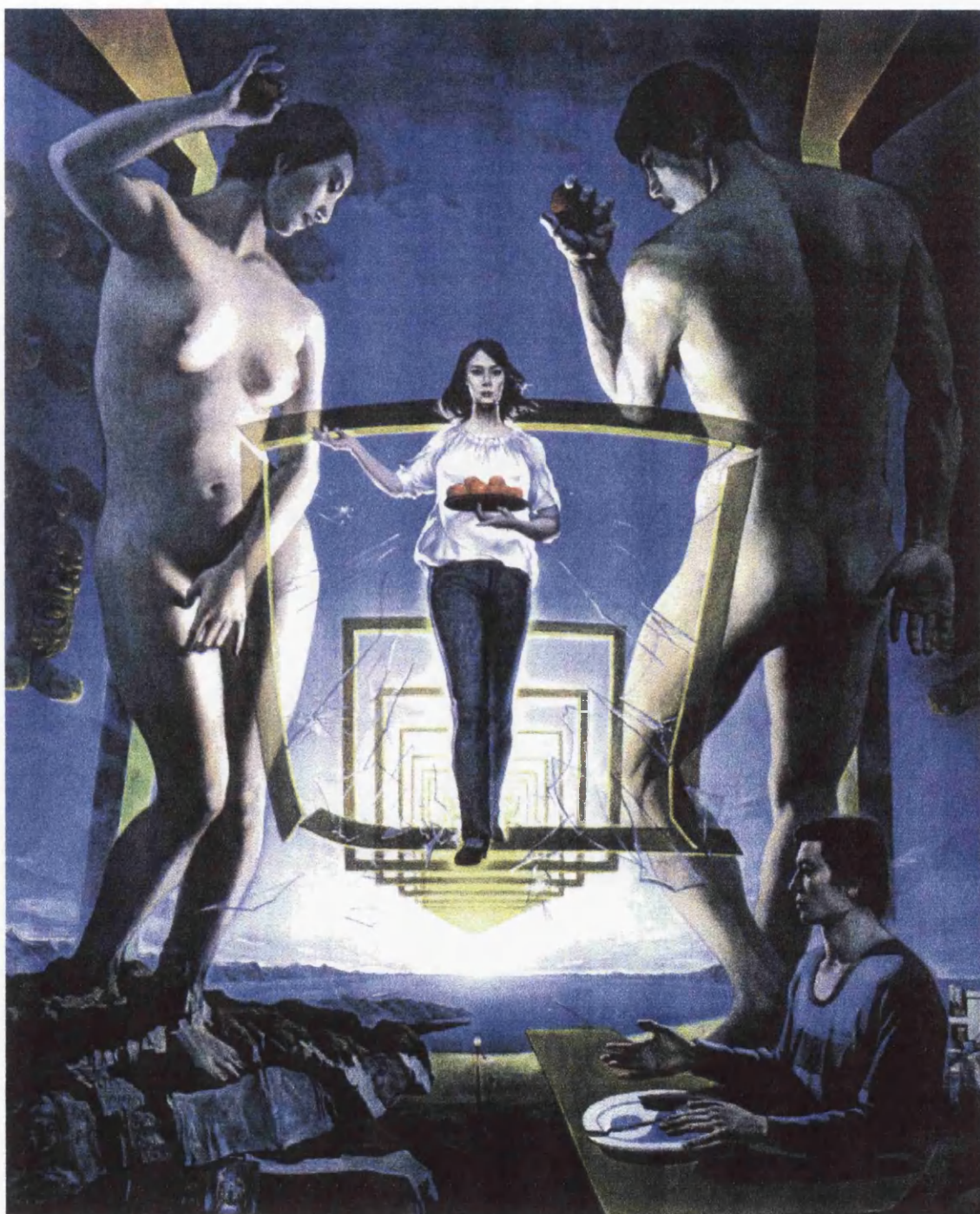


fig 4.25 Zhang Qun and Meng Luding 1985 oil painting 195 x 165 cms
In the New Era - Revelation From Adam and Eve



fig 5.01 Lu Yanshao 1976 *guohua*
Autumn Day, Opening Clouds



fig 5.02 Zhou Jingxin 1984
guohua 103 x 104 cms
Figures From "The Watermargin"





fig 5.03 Wang Yingchu and Yang Lizhou 1984 *guohua* 190 x 178 cms
Iron Walls in the Taihang Mountains



fig 5.04 Li Shinan 1984 *guohua* Those Who Extract Light



fig 5.05 Zhou Shaohua 1984 *guohua* 178 x 152 cms The Spirit of the Yellow River

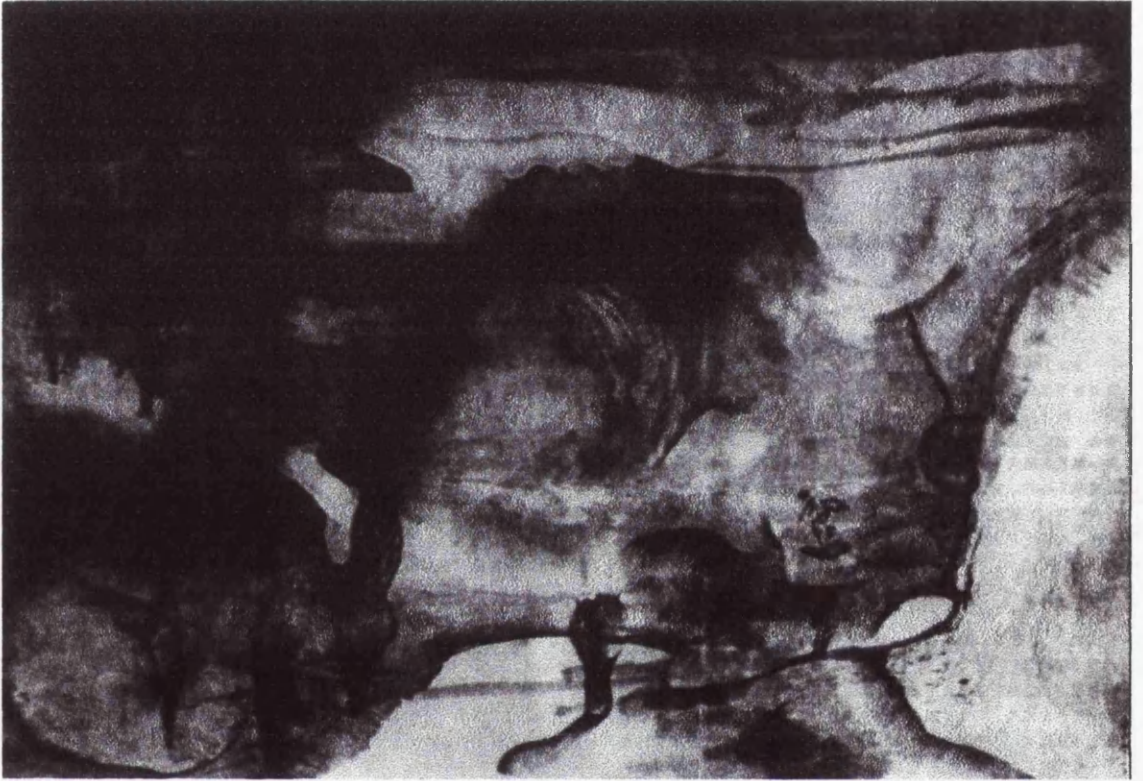


fig 5.06 Gu Wenda 1981 *guohua* 220 x 155 cms White Nights



fig 5.07 Gu Wenda 1983 *guohua* 700 x 140 cms Taiji

fig 5.08 Zhuo Hejun 1983
guohua 49 x 80cms
Dusk on Spring River

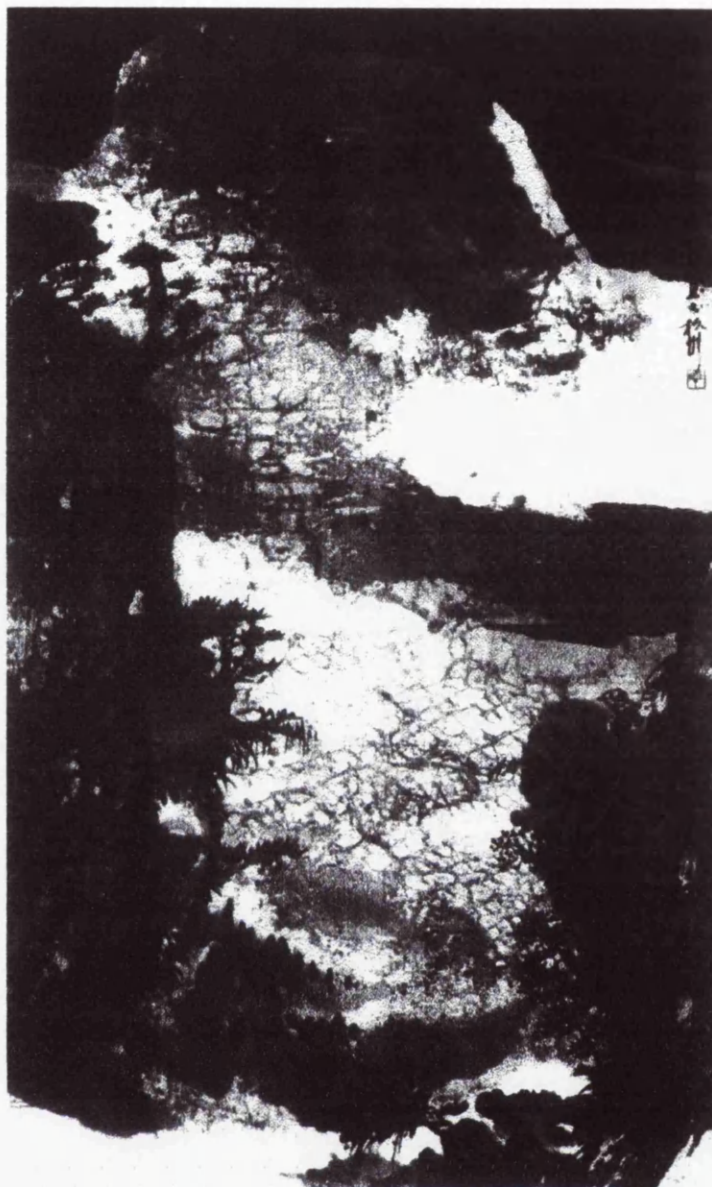


fig 5.09 Chen Xiangxun 1987
guohua 180 x 295 cms
Apprentice Series. Mi Dots



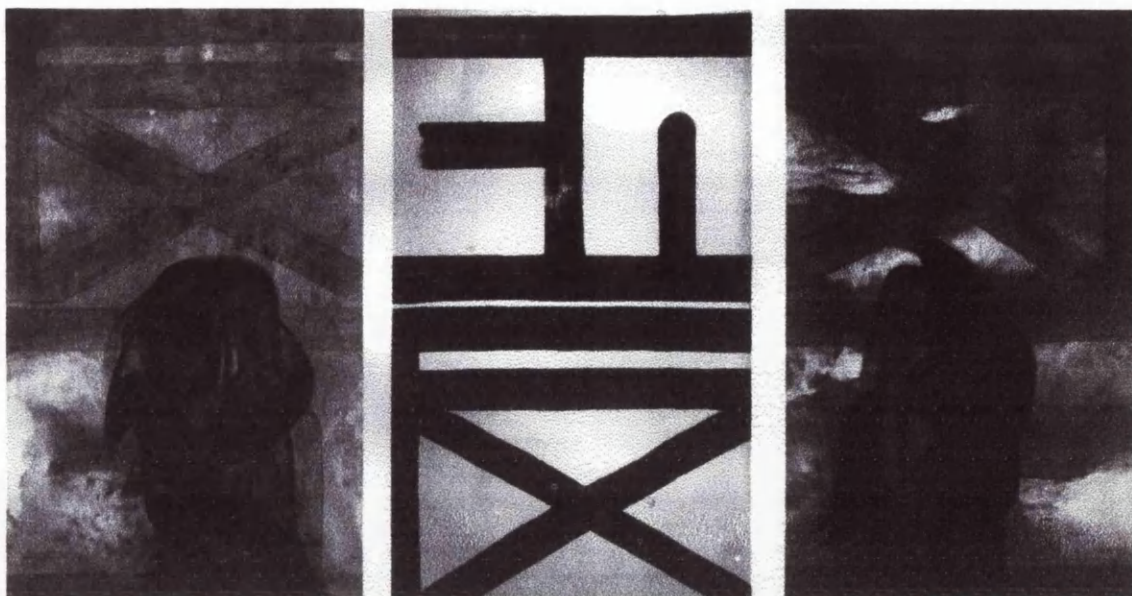


fig 5.10 Gu Wenda 1986 *guohua* 291 x 540 cms 1991102 and Reverse Characters



fig 5.11 Gu Wenda 1985 *guohua*
Must We Read and Comment on the "Tranquility" Written by Three Men and Three Women



fig 5.12 Liu Dahong 1985 oil painting
Irrepressible Spring-filled Garden

fig 5.13 Wang Qiang 1985 mixed media
Soft Sculpture

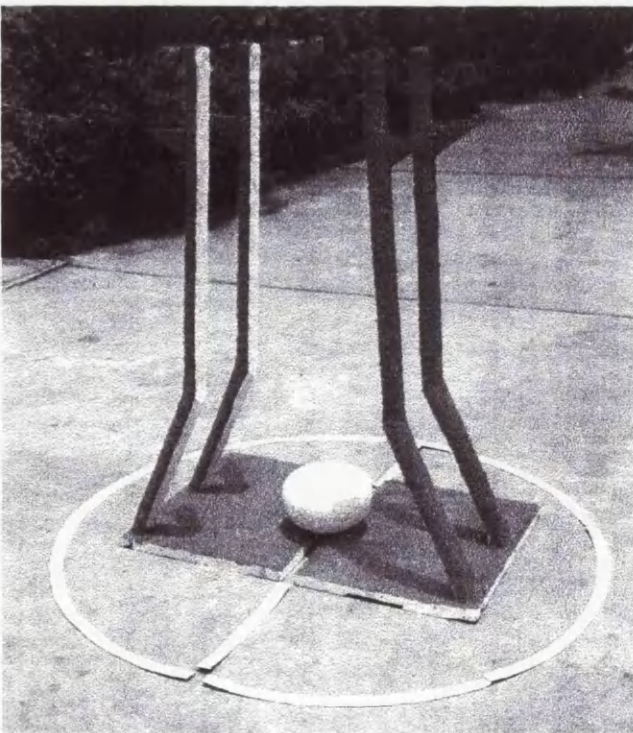
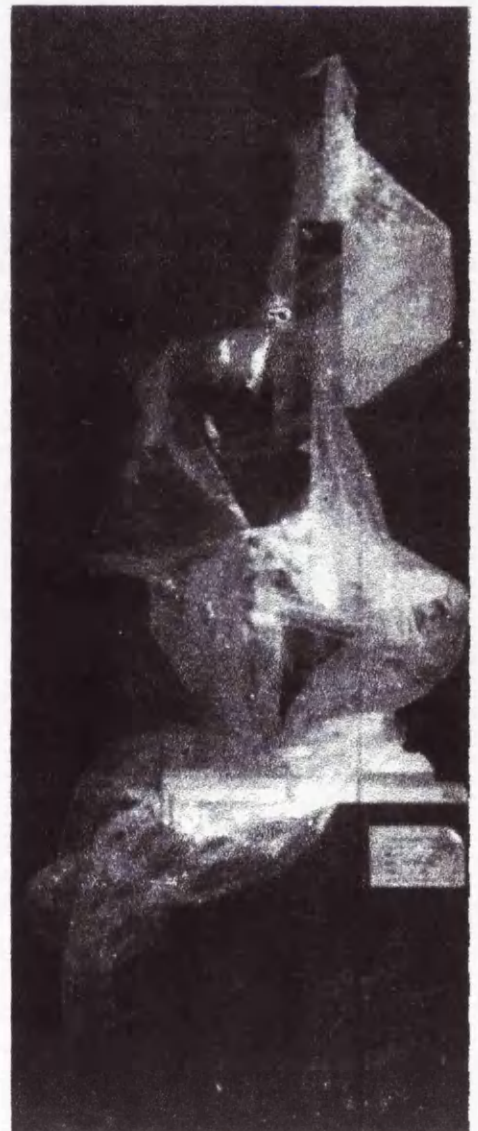


fig 5.14 Lin Chun 1985 sculpture 148 cms high
Laozi



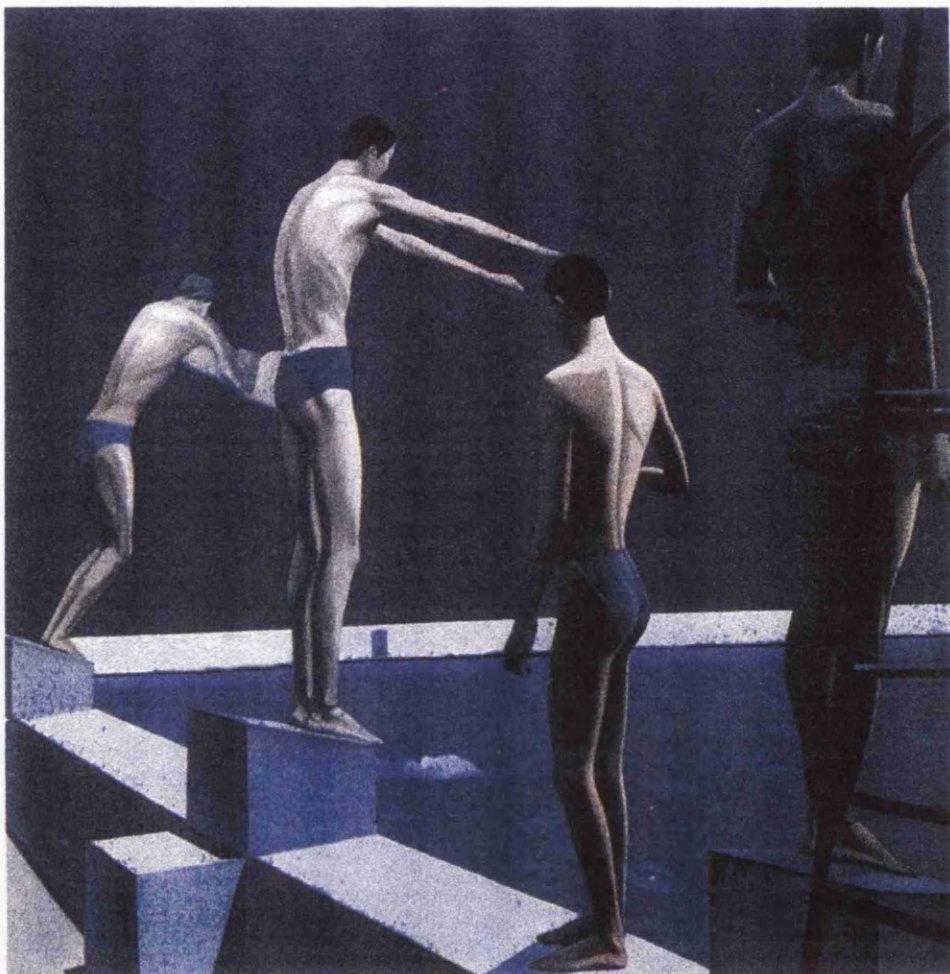


fig 5.15 Zhang Peili 1985 oil painting 175 x175 cms
Midsummer Swimmers



fig 5.16 Geng Jianyi 1985 oil painting
Summer 1985, Yet Another Shaved Head



5.17 Zhang Peili 1985 oil painting
180 x 130 cms
End Note

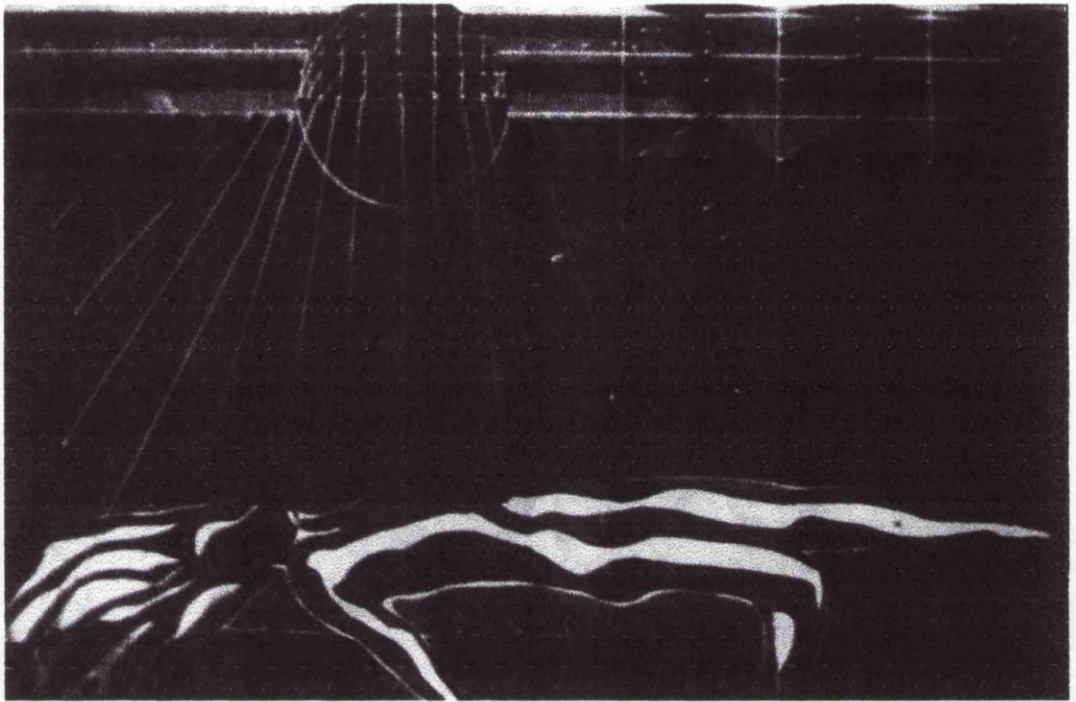
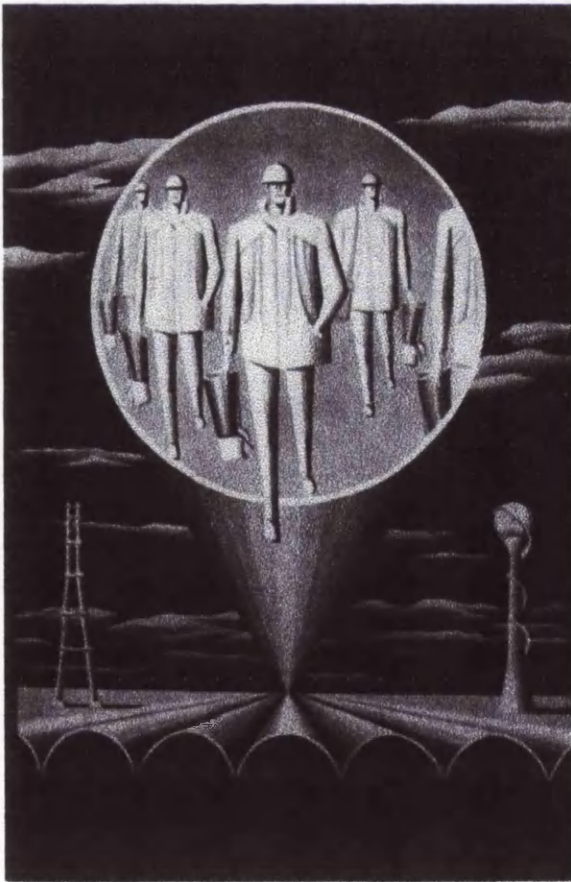


fig 5.18 Bao Jianfei 1985 wood, wire and perspex 40 x 60 cms New Space 1



5.19 Song Ling 1985 *guohua* 120 x 100cms
People Pipeline

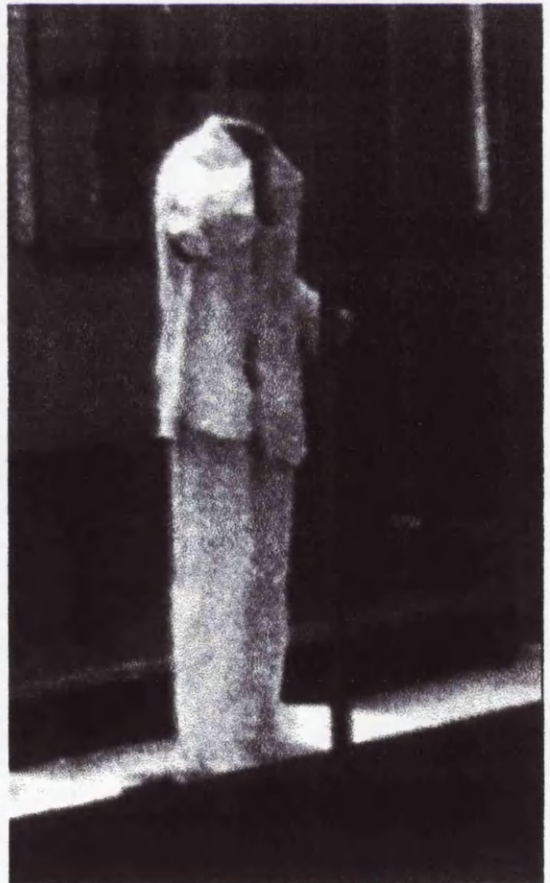


fig 5.20 Wang Qiang 1985 sculpture
5th Symphony, 2nd Movement,
Beginning Adagio

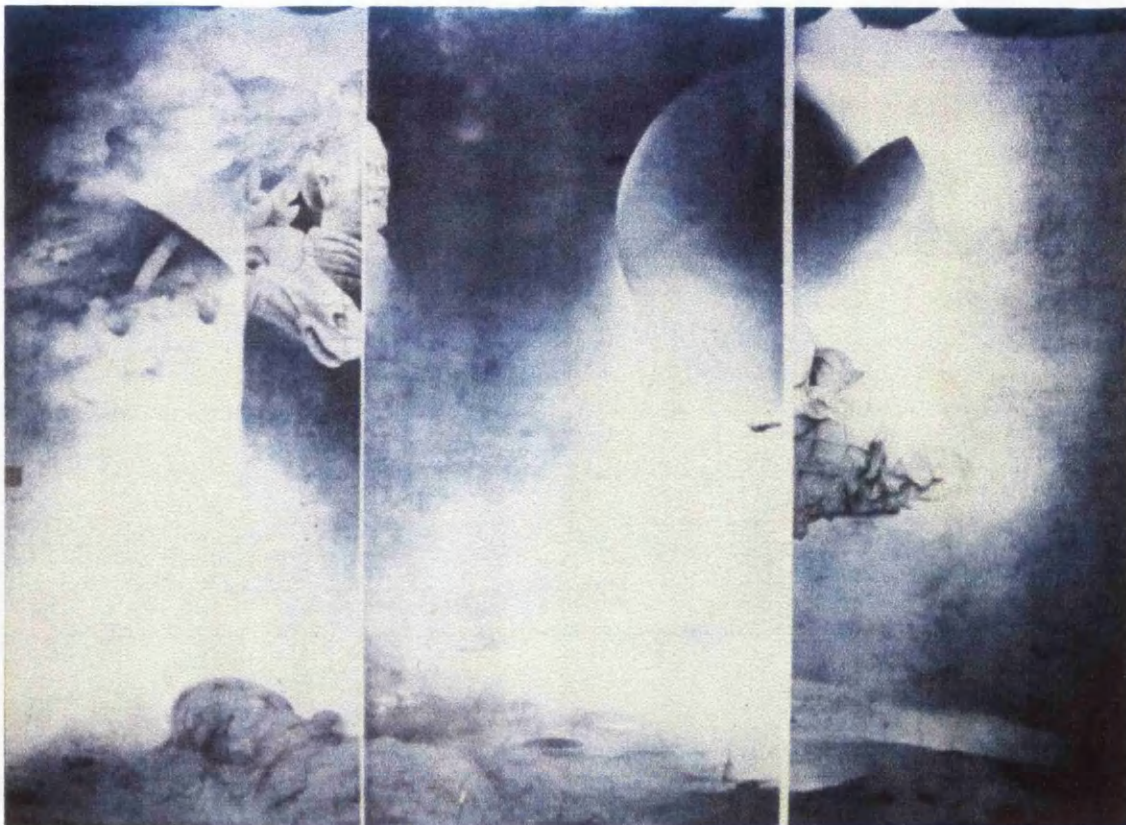


fig 5.21 Shen Qin 1985 *guohua*
The Dream of Hua and Xia

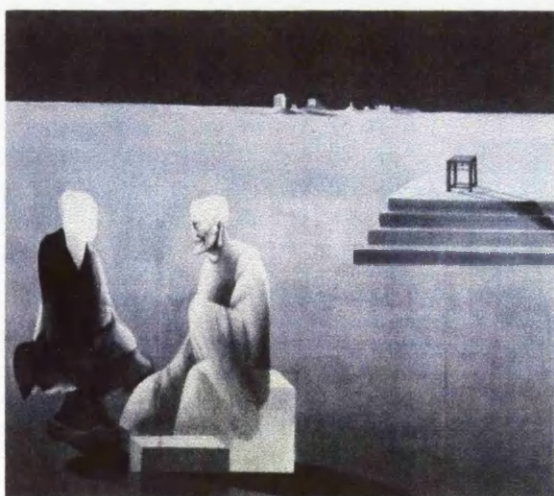


fig 5.22 Shen Qin 1985 *guohua*
Master and Disciple Dialogue

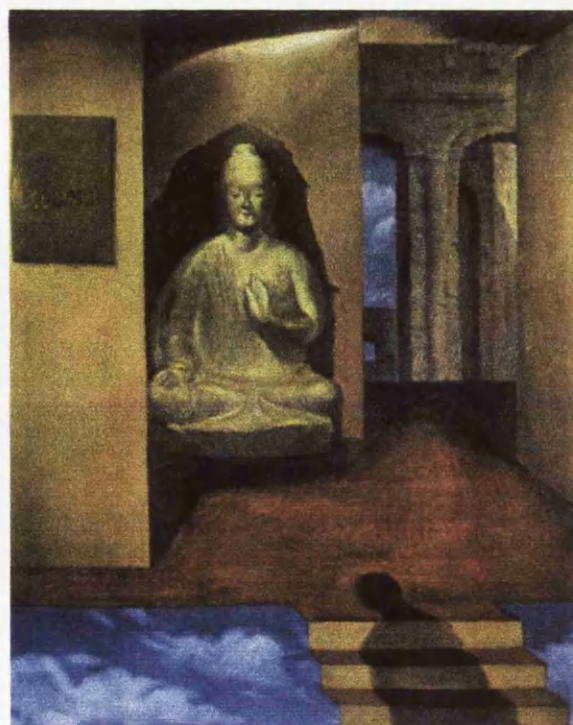


fig 5.23 Cao Xiaodong 1985 oil painting
Work N° 1

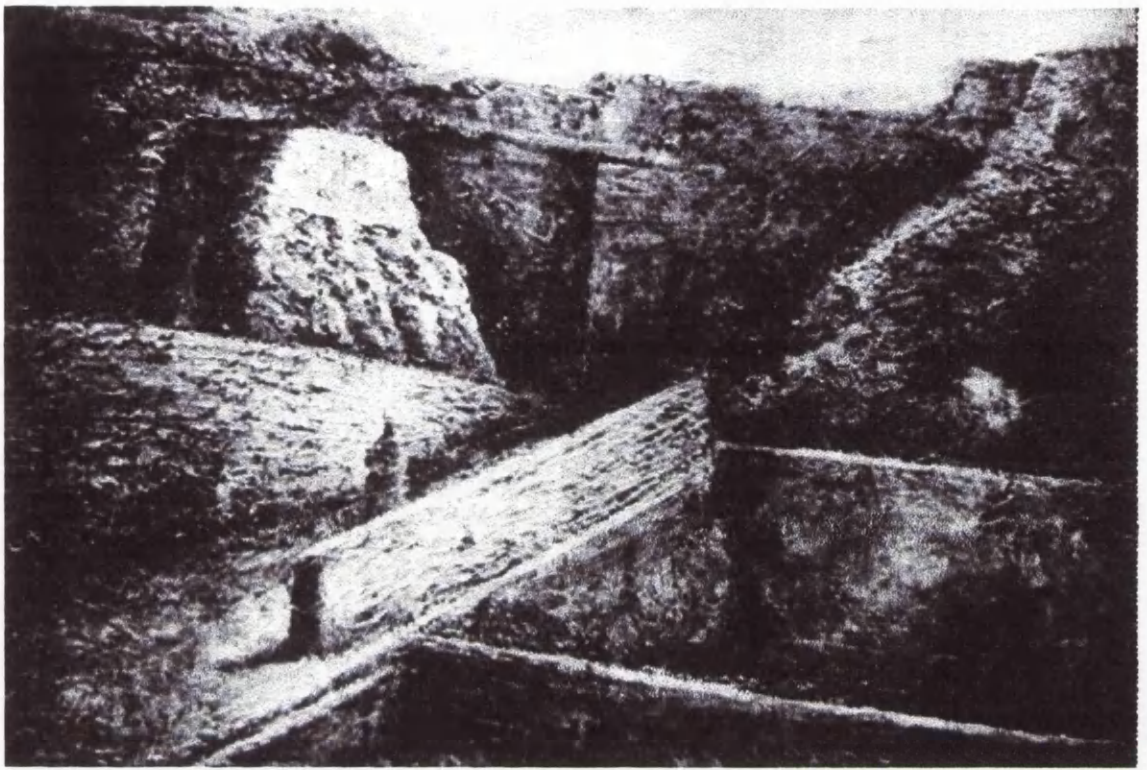


fig 5.24 Ding Fang 1985 oil painting City Wall

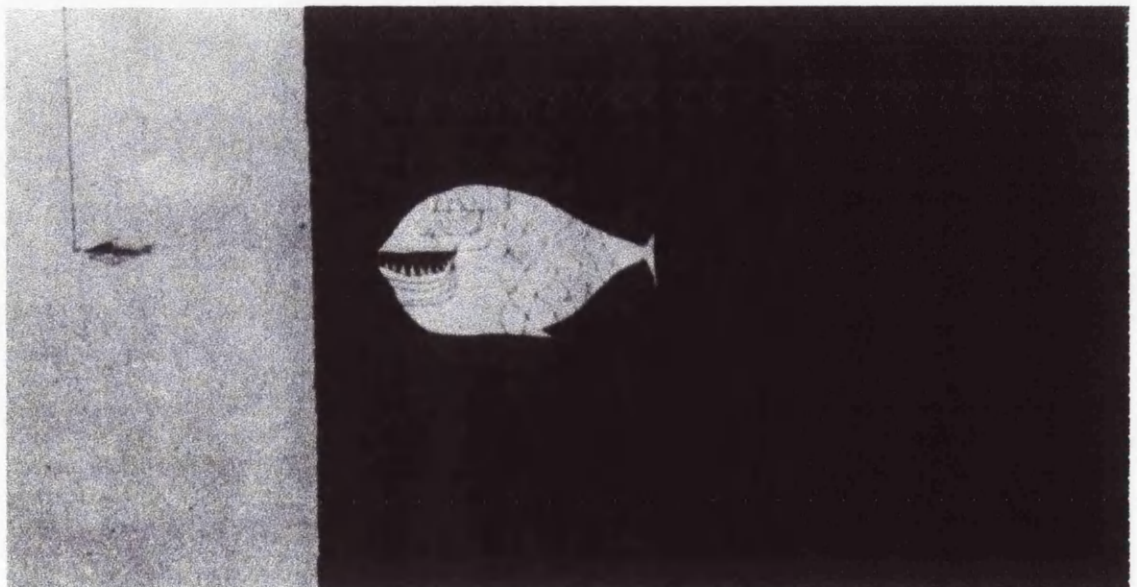


fig 5.25 Yang Zhilin 1985 oil painting People Evolved From Fish, People Like Eating Fish



fig 5.26 Wu Shanzhuan and the "Red Humour" Group 1986 installation
70% Red. 25% Black. 5% White

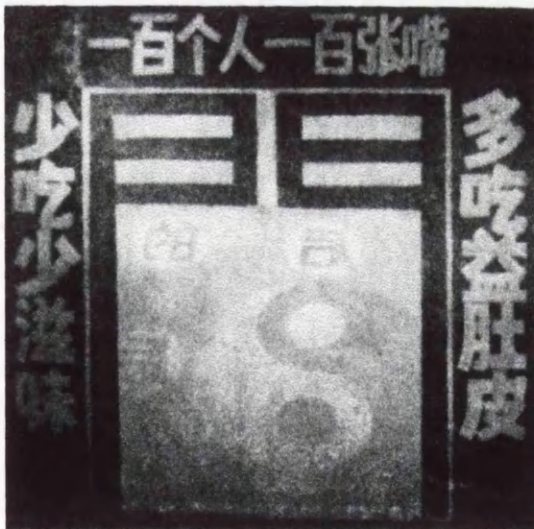
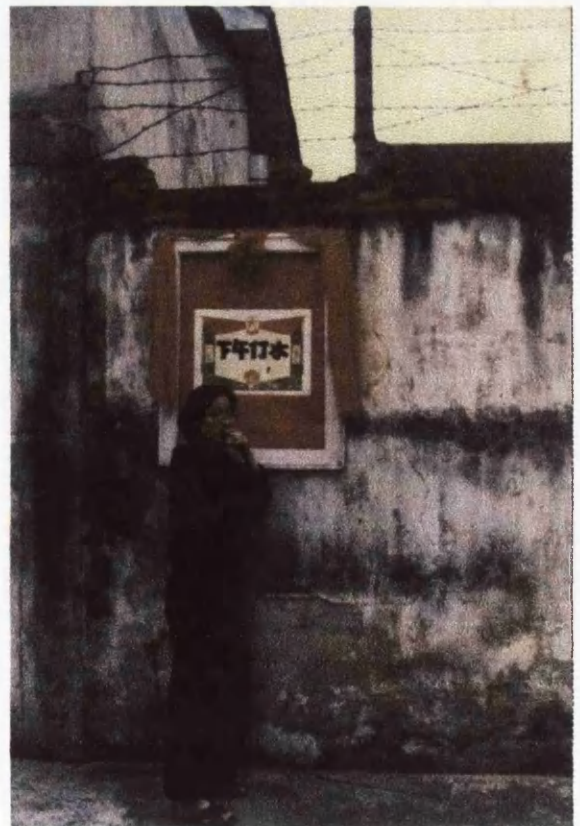


fig 5.27 Wu Shanzhuan and the
 "Red Humour" Group 1986 installation
70% Red. 25% Black. 5% White

fig 5.38 Wu Shanzhuan circa 1986
No Water This Afternoon



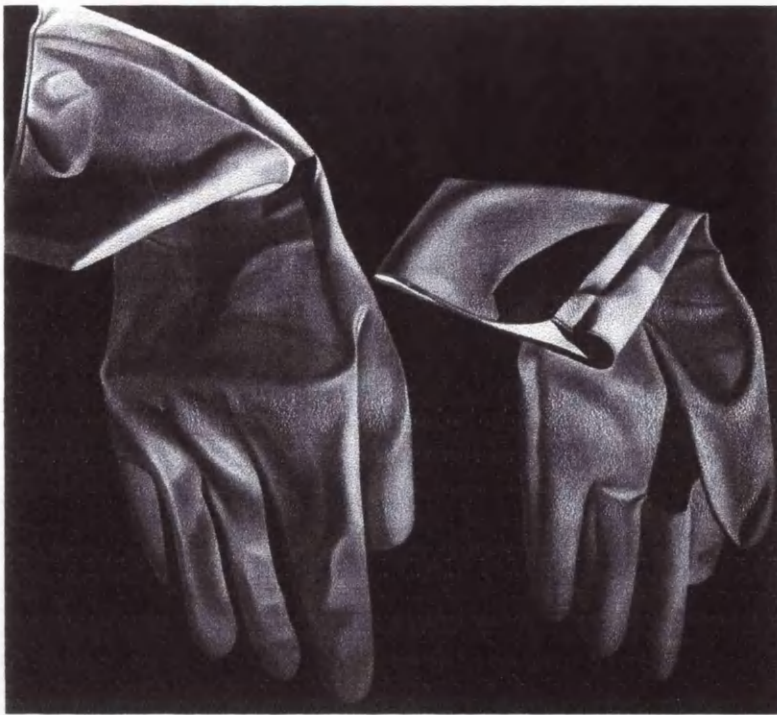


fig 5.29 Zhang Peili 1987
oil painting 180 x 200 cms
X ?

fig 5.30 Zhang Peili 1988
video 180 mins
30 x 30

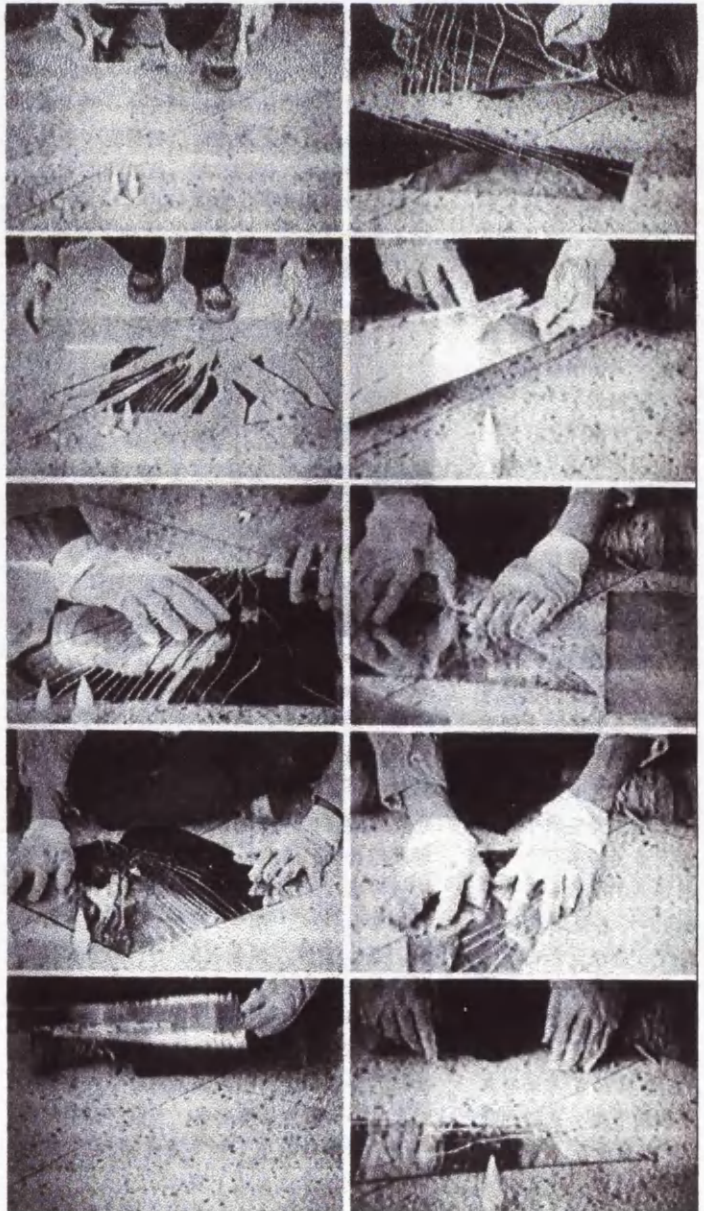




fig 6.01 Huang Zhen undated
drawing
Yi Guide



fig 6.02 Zhan Jianjun 1957 oil painting 350 x 180 cms
New Settlers on Virgin Lands

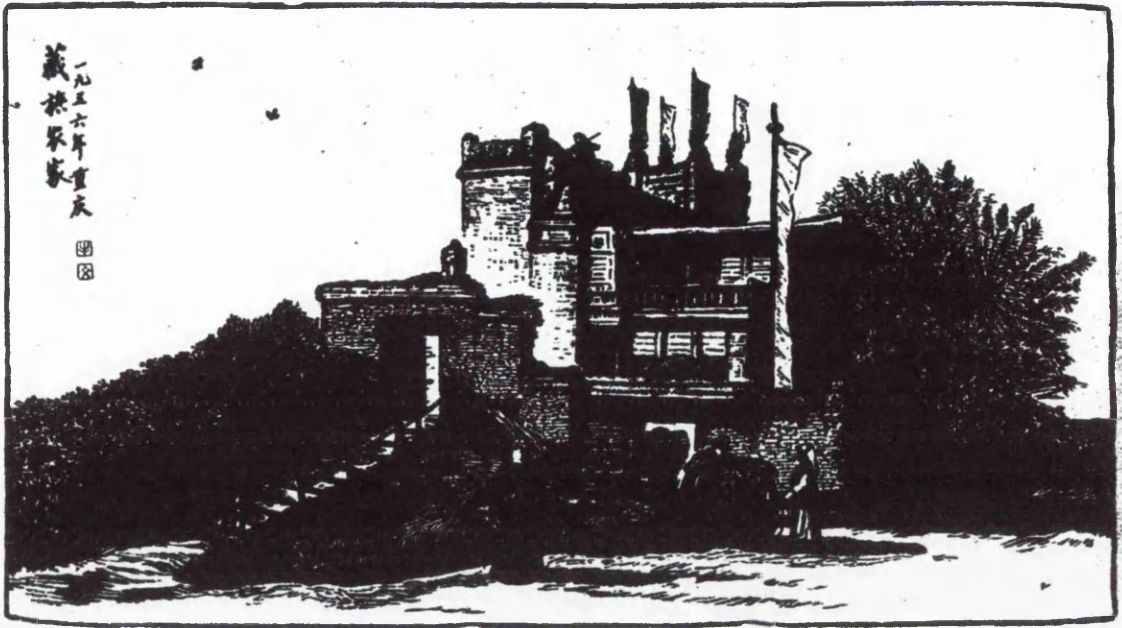
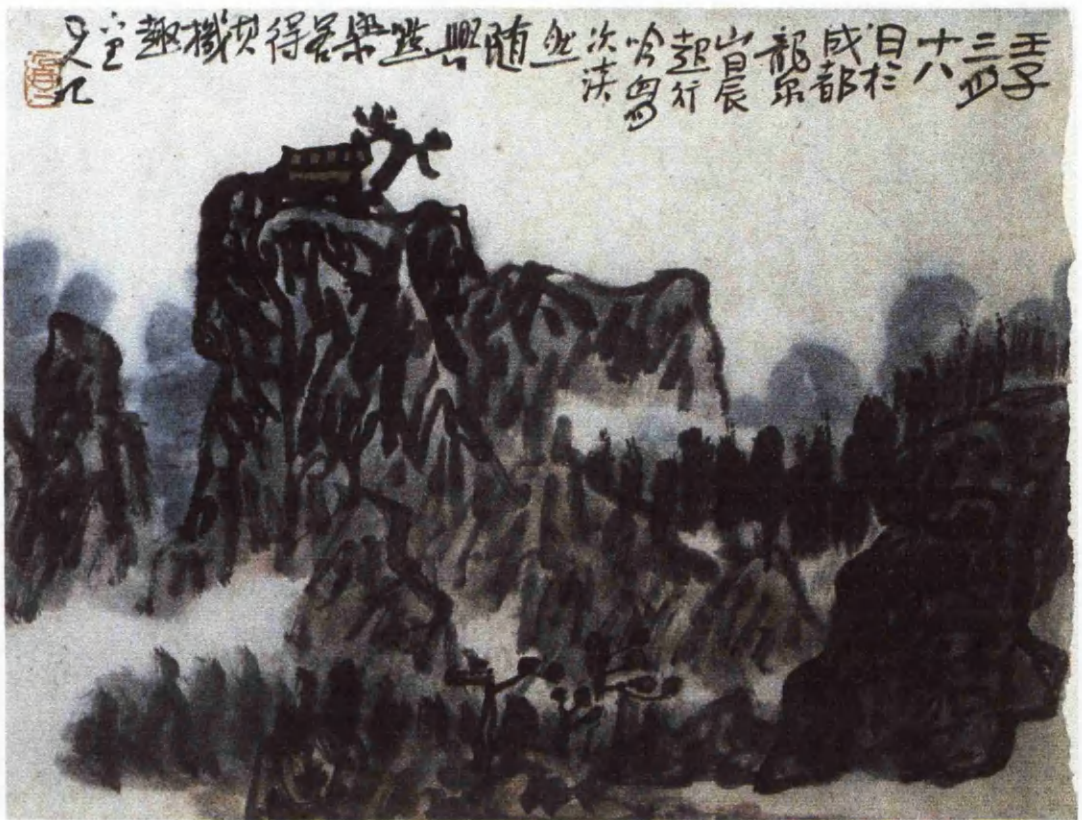


fig 6.03 Niu Wen 1956 woodcut print 46 x 26.5 cms A Tibetan Peasant Family



fig 6.04 Li Huanmin 1963 woodcut print 54.2 x 49 cms Along the Golden Path



6.05 Chen Zizhuang undated guohua
Leaf from the Longquan Shanshui Album

6.06 Li Huasheng 1982 guohua
 136 x 68.5 cms
Painting After Lu You's Poem





fig 6.07 Liu Shaohui 1979
illustration 27 x27 cms
Zhao Shubin

fig 6.08 Chen Zhichuan 1980
gouache
June Snow



fig 6.09 Liu Ziming undated
oil painting 92 x 65 cms
Scenery in Dali



fig 6.10 Wang Jinyuan 1984
guohua 178 x 143 cms
Dancing Dragon and Snake





fig 6.11 Jiang Tiefeng 1981 heavy colour painting 105 x 105 cms Jiangnan Spring

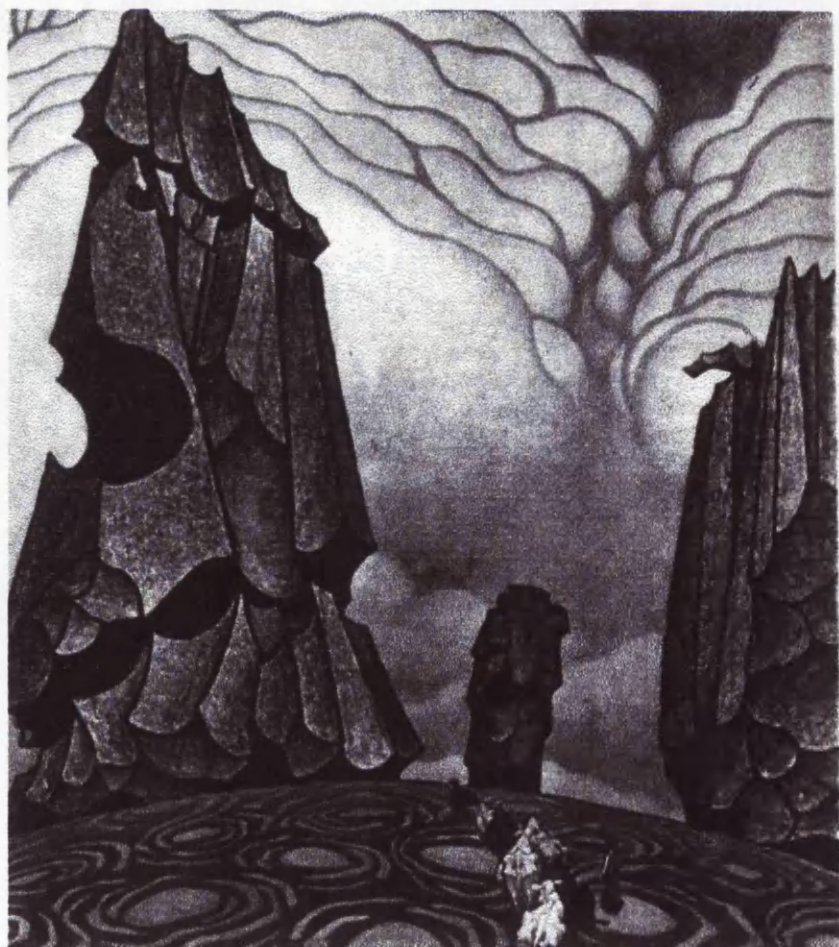


fig 6.12 Zeng Xiaofeng 1980 oil painting 160 x 144 cms On the Mountain Peak



fig 6.13 Zhou Chunyu 1980 oil painting 150 x 190 cms The New Generation of Tibetans



fig 6.14 Zhang Xiaogang 1981 oil painting 67 x 117 cms Clouds in the Sky

fig 6.15 Cheng Chonglin
1984 oil painting
72 x 103 cms
Brother and Sister



fig 6.16 Gao Xiaohua 1983
oil painting 80 x 115 cms
Early Spring. Old Forest





fig 6.17 Hao Ping 1983() woodcut print 45 x 45 cms The Sound of Mortar and Pestle



fig 6.18 Zheng Xu 1984 woodcut print 72 x 64 cms People of Lahu Nationality



fig 6.19 He Kun 1986 woodcut print 51 x 61 cms Flowing Light



fig 6.20 Wei Qicong 1986 woodcut print Autumn Evening II



fig 6.21 Tian Shixin 1982
wood sculpture 93 cms high
Miao Girl

fig 6.22 Pu Guochang 1985
carved and painted board
62 x 42 cms
Mountain Ghosts





fig 6.23 Pu Guochang 1985 *guohua* Returning to Her Home



fig 6.24 He Kun *guohua* 68 x 134 cms Mountain Children



fig 6.25 Ah Ge 1977 woodcut print
Chairman Hua and the Liberated Serfs. Hearts Linked Together



fig 6.26 Qijia Dawa 1977 woodcut print
Liberated Serfs Have Aspirations

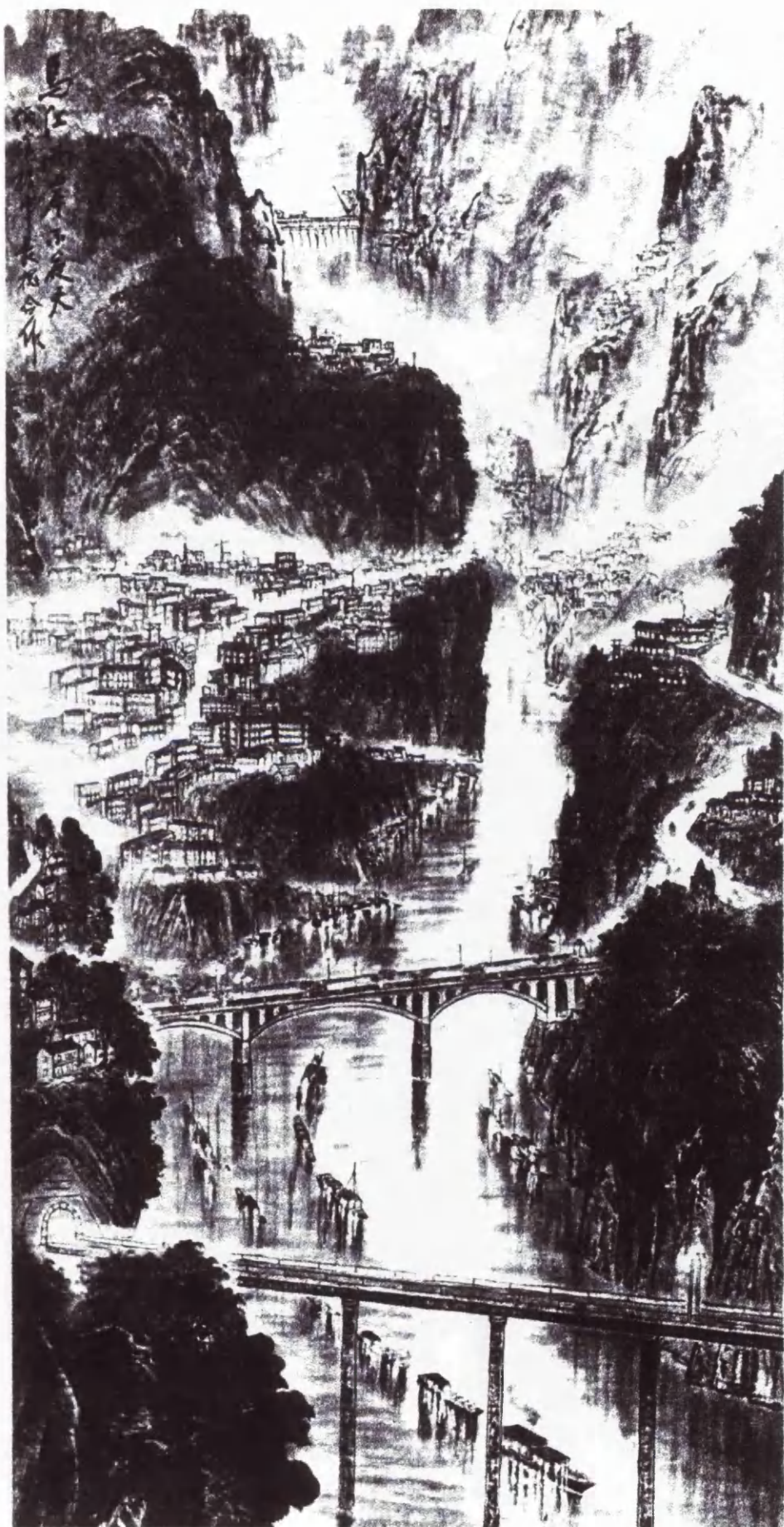


fig 6.27 Yang Changkui, Wang Zhenzhong and Hu Bingxuan 1977 *guohua*
Night Never Falls on the Banks of the Wujiang River

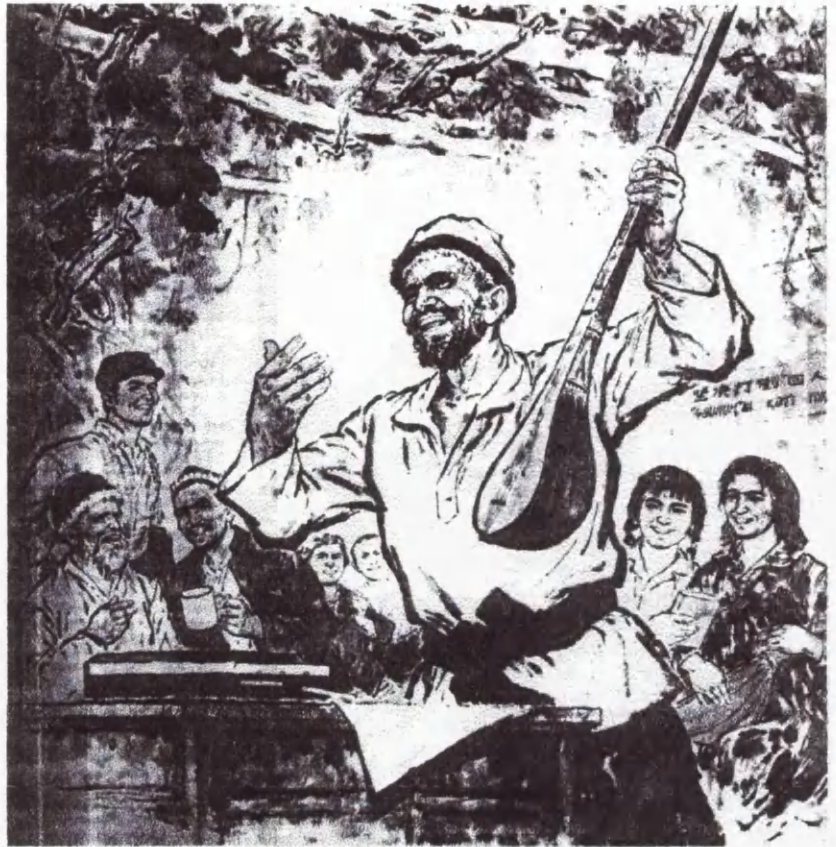


fig 6.28 Long Qinglian
1977 *guohua*
Eulogy



fig 6.29 Luo Zhengyou 1977 woodcut print Rage



fig 6.30 Li Xiu 1977
woodcut Print
Returning Home After
Graduation



fig 6.31 Qijia Dawa 1965
print illustrations 28.5 x 21 cms
My Childhood, n°3



fig 6.32 Qijia Dawa 1965
print illustrations 28.5 x 21 cms
My Childhood



fig 6.33 Renzhen Langjia,
Nima Zeren , Yixi Zeren,
Da Wa, Yixi Sangdan,
Mei Dingkai, Chen Bingxi
and Lu Shuming.
1982 *tangka* painting
Gesar of Ling

6.34 Luosong Xiangqiu and
Gesang Yixi
1986 *tangka* painting
Tangdong Jiebu





fig 6.35 Wang Huaxiang woodcut print The Scholar Tree

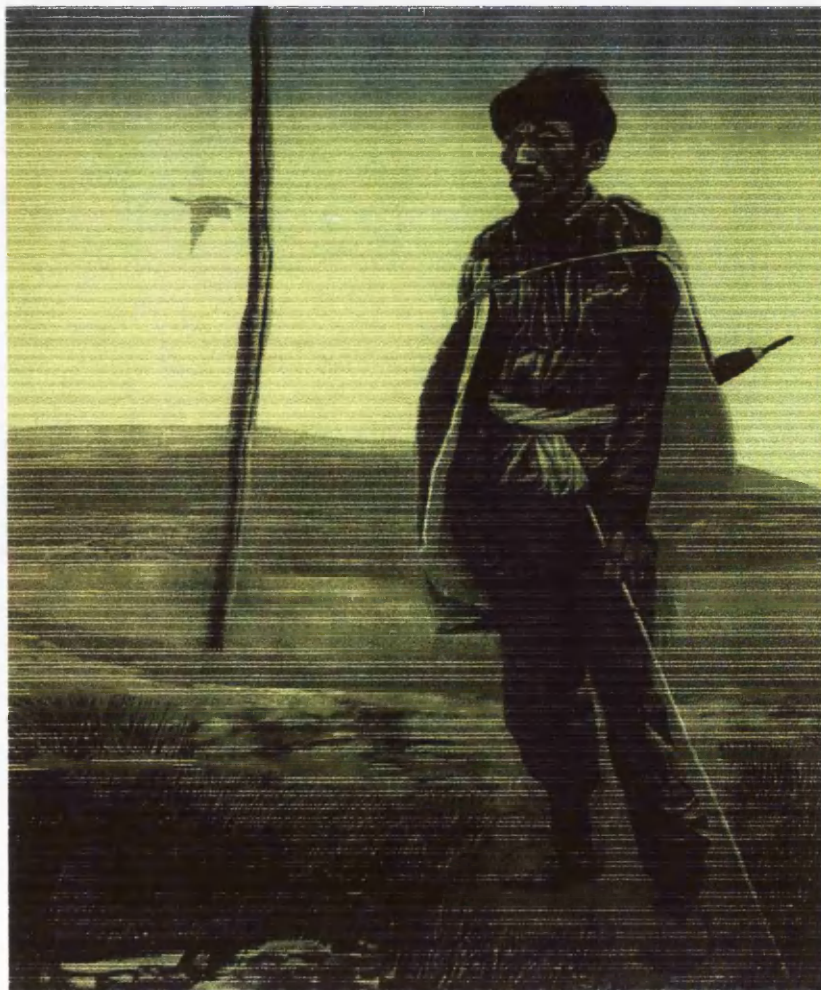


fig 6.36 Wang Huaxiang woodcut print Herdsman

fig 6.37 Zeng Xiaofeng
1984 coloured drawing
20 x 26 cms
Wa Men



fig 6.38 Zeng Xiaofeng
1990 acrylic on canvas
76 x 75 cms
Table





fig 6.39 Mao Xuhui 1985
collage and gouache
72 x 95 cms
Listless Days

fig 6.40 Mao Xuhui 1986
mixed media and collage
27.5 x 19 cms
David and Venus

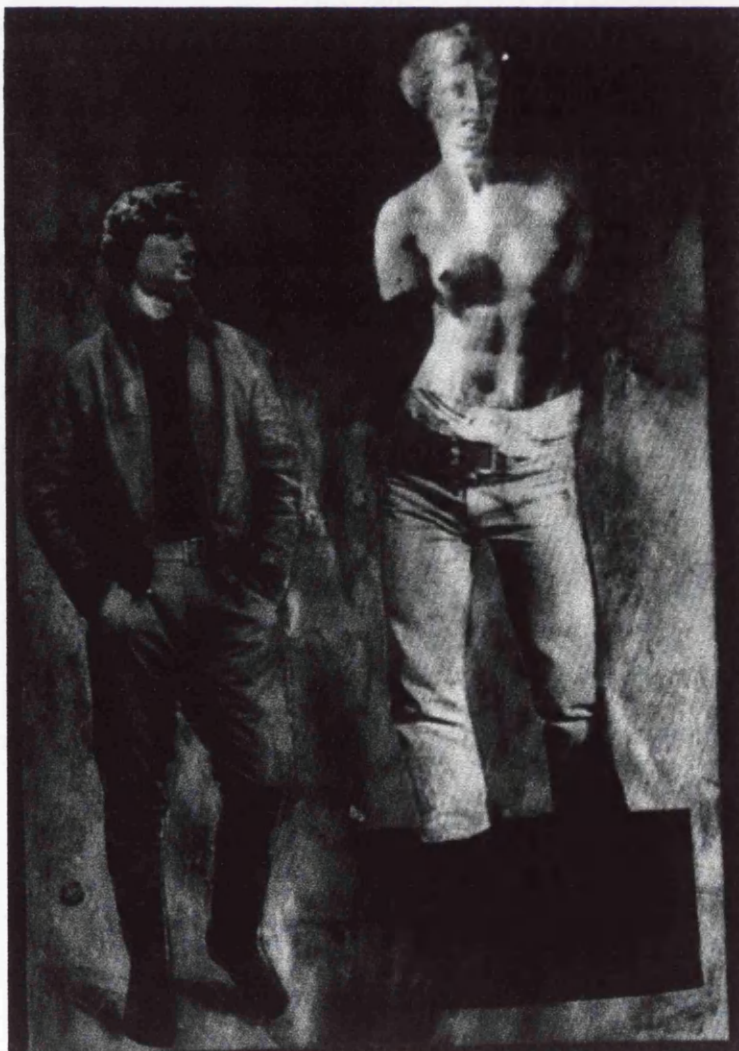


fig 6.41 Ye Yongqing 1985
oil painting 60 x 50 cms
The City is a Machine
Which Disposes
of Human Waste



fig 6.42 Mao Xuhui 1987
oil painting 78 x 108 cms
Private Space. Blind Corner





fig 6.43 Ye Yongqing 1988
oil painting 100 x 120 cms
The Pursued

fig 6.44 Ma Yun 1988
oil painting 110 x 80 cms
Persons N°1



fig 6.45 Wang Falin 1988
oil painting 84 x 100 cms
Endless Rank





fig 4.46 Zhang Xiaogang 1988 oil painting Love in Life and Death



fig 4.47 Yang Shu 1988 oil painting 300 x 200 cms The Puzzle of the Reader

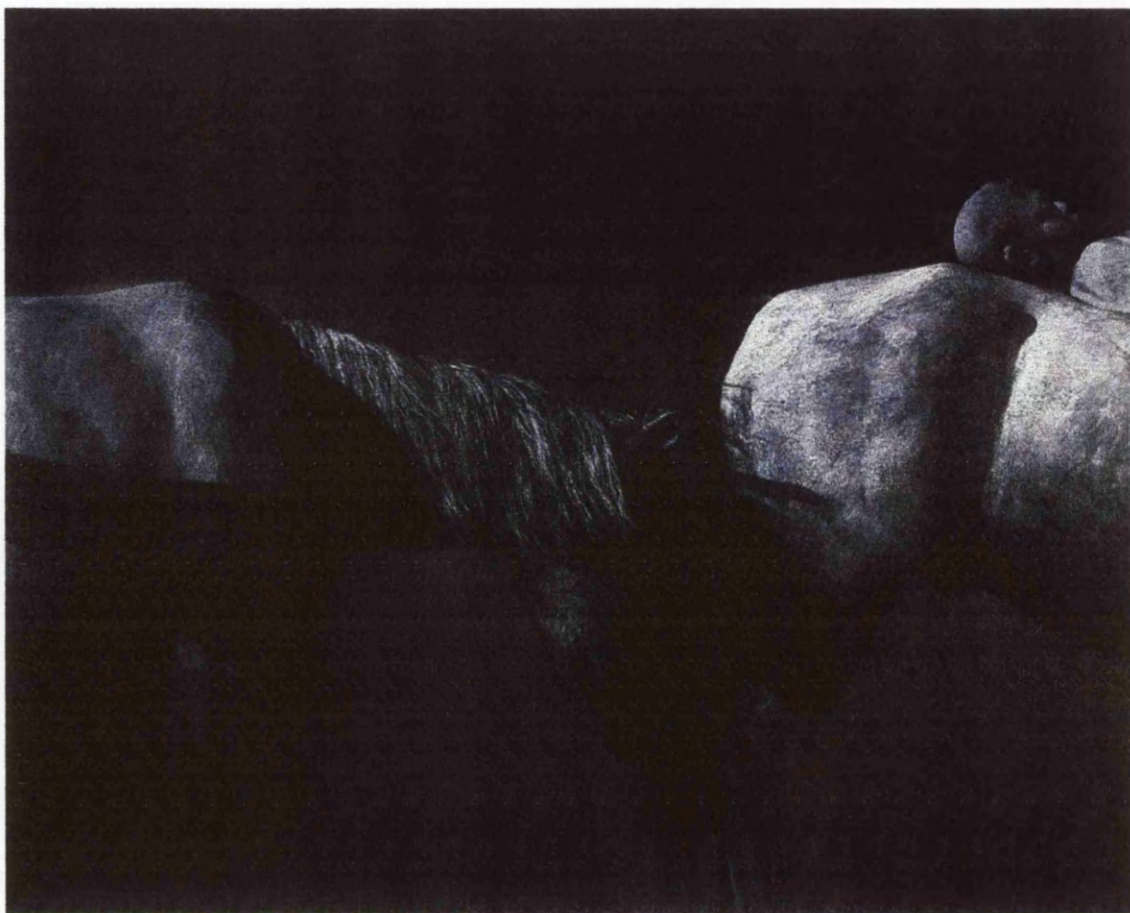


fig 4.48 He Duoling 1988
oil painting
100 x 120 cms
Holy Infant so Tender
and Mild

fig 4.49 Wang Yi 1988
oil painting
100 x 110 cms
Grey Scenery

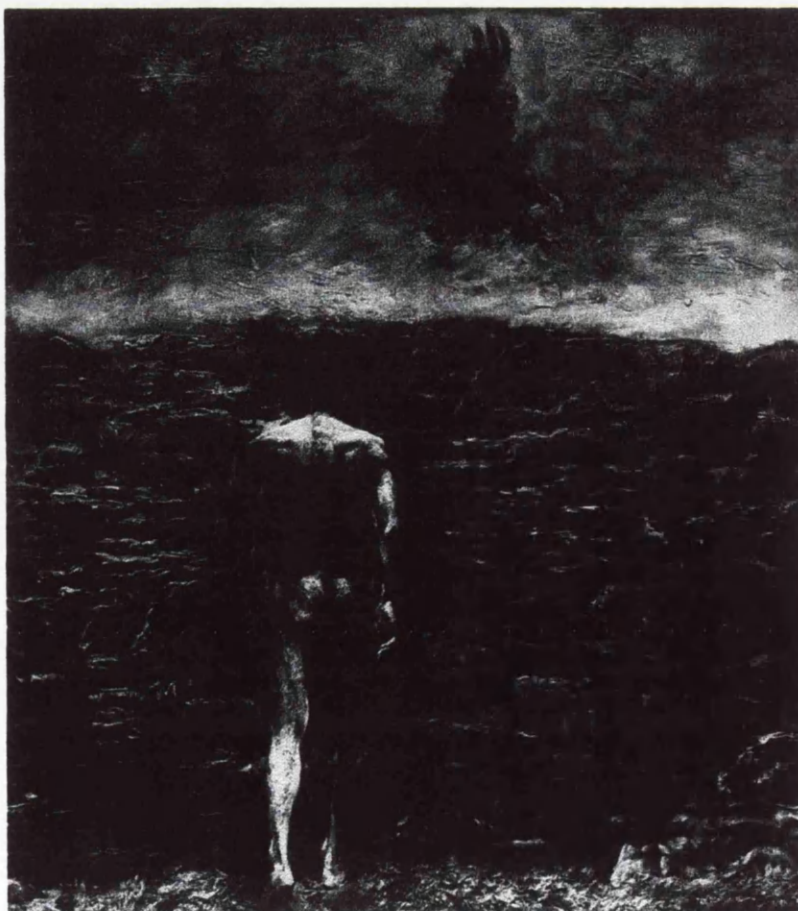




fig 6.50 Mao Xuhui 1990 oil painting
Patriarch. The Big Sofa

fig. 6.51 Mao Xuhui 1989
oil painting 76 x 53 cms
Patriarch

fig. 6.52 Mao Xuhui 1990
oil painting 120 x 150 cms
Patriarch of an Ordinary Family





fig 7.01 photograph 1976 Copying Revolutionary Poems



fig 7.02 Municipal Food Company 1976 Cartoon Untitled (The Gang of Four)

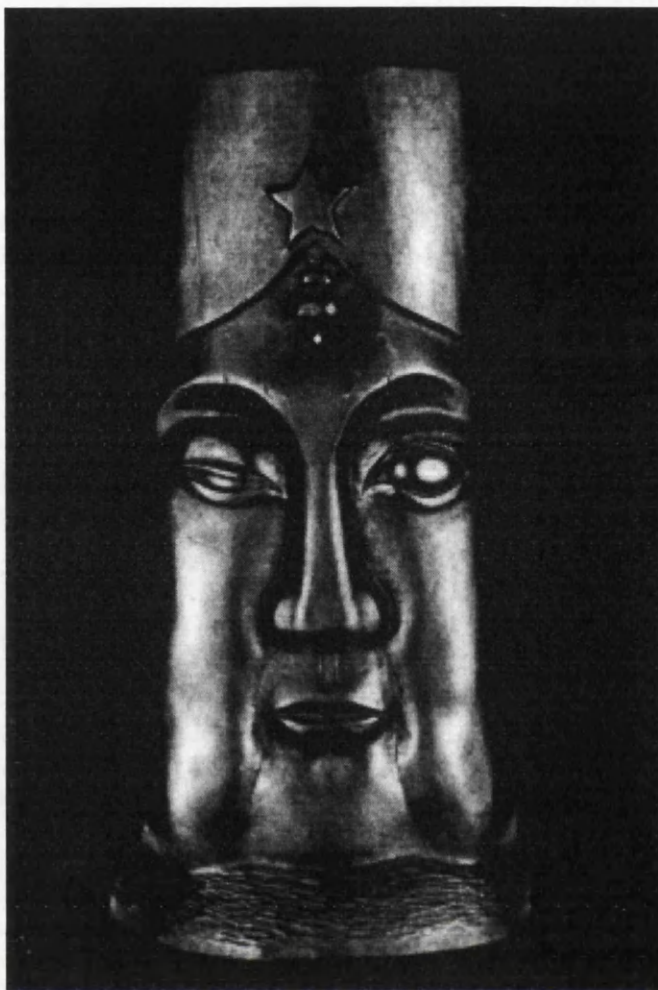


fig 7.03 Wang Keping 1978 sculpture
Idol



fig 7.04 Yan Li 1978 oil painting
Dialogue



fig 7.05 Ma Desheng 1980 woodcut
Six Square Meters



fig 7.06 Huang Rui 1980 oil painting
Worldly - Autumn



fig 7.07 Feng Guodong 1980 oil painting 120 x 408 cms
People At Ease



fig 7.08 Zhong Ming 1980 oil painting
He Is Himself - Sartre



fig 7.09 Wu Guangyao 1986 action art
Untitled



fig 7.10 Sheng Qi and Xi Jianjun 1986 action art
Concert 21



fig 7.11 Liu Xun 1986 oil painting 70 x 82 cms Withered Lotus



fig 7.12 Wei Qimei 1983 oil painting 178 x 90 cms New Lines

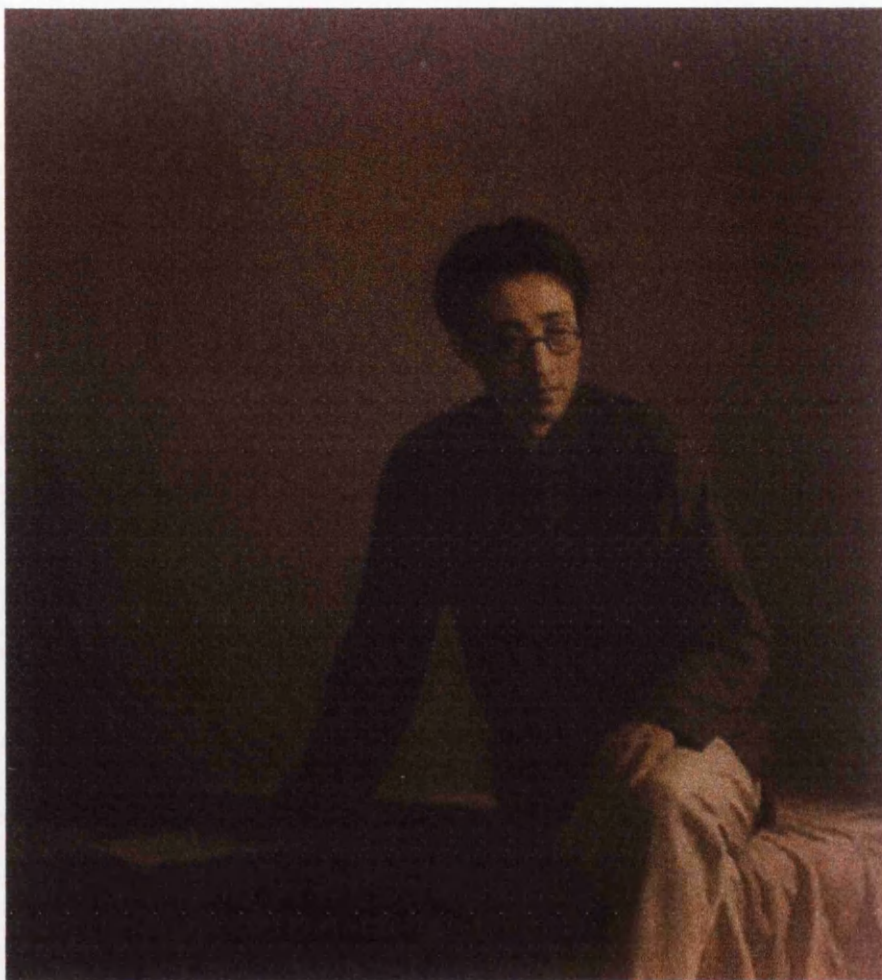


fig 7.13 Jin Shangyi 1884 oil painting 118 x 136 cms Qu Qiubai



fig 7.14 Sun Weimin 1984 oil painting 140 x 128 cms The Twelfth Moon



fig 7.15 Xia Xiaowan
oil painting 180 x 172 cms
Human Circle

fig 7.16 She Benming
oil painting
Nirvana

fig 7.17 Ma Lu
oil painting 82 x 82 cms
Equilibrium

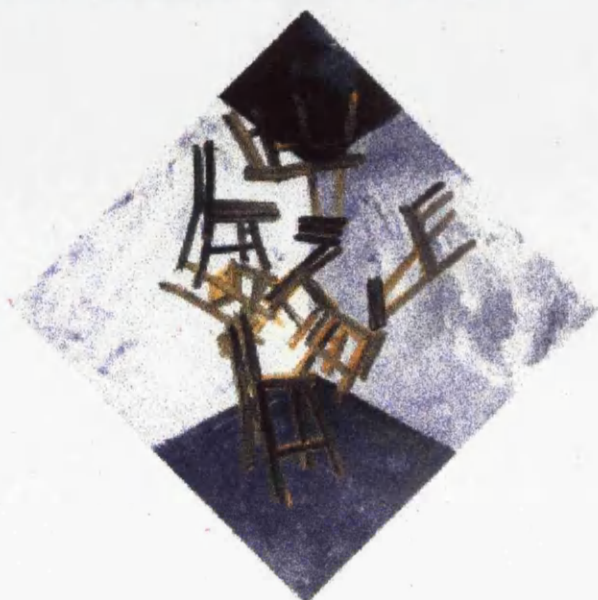




fig 7.18 Zhang Furong circa 1988 oil painting Dreamworld



fig 7.19 Lu Shengzhong and Xu Bing exhibition 1988

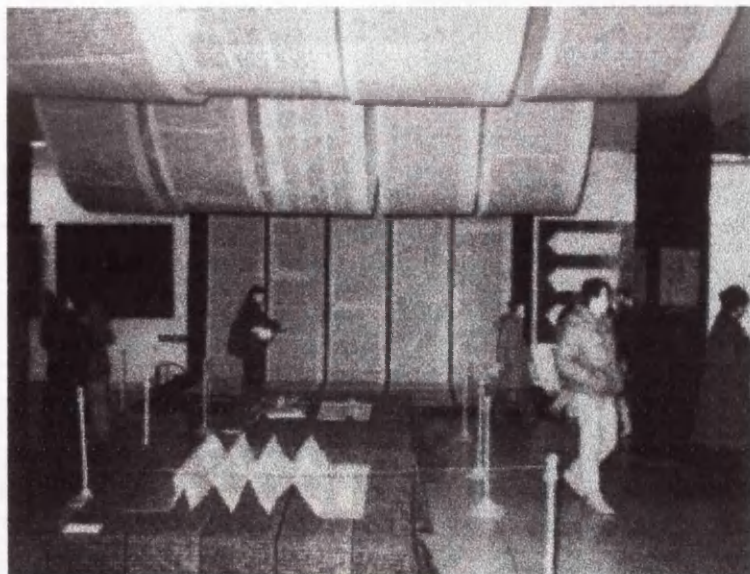


fig 7.20 Xu Bing
1988 woodcut installation
Book of Heaven

fig 7.21 Li Shan
1989 performance
Good Bye

fig 7.22 Wang Guangyi
oil painting 148.5 x 120 cms
Mao Zedong - Red Grid

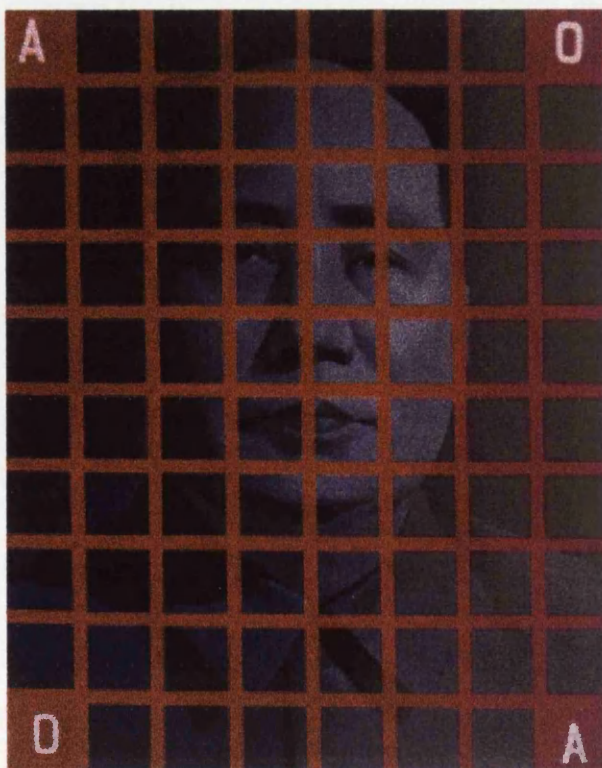




fig 7.23 Geng Jianyi
1988 oil painting
The Second State

fig 7.24 Song Yonghong
oil painting
No Ticket Collector

fig 7.25 Meng Luding
1988 oil painting
Untitled 3



fig 7.26 Inflationist Group
1989 mixed material
Midnight Mass, the Last
End of Century Trial

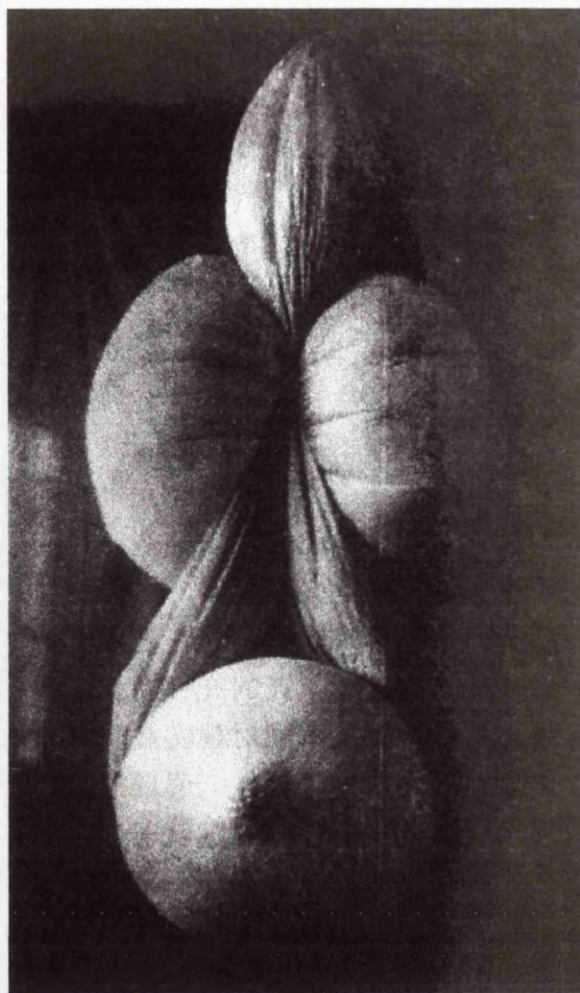


fig 7.27 Xiao Lu 1988 installation
Dialogue





fig 7.28 Long Rui 1986 *guohua* Landscape



fig 7.29 Jia Youfu 1988 *guohua* Wind

fig 7.30 Chen Ping
1987 *guohua*
Vision of My Hometown

fig 7.31 Wang Mengqi
guohua
Listening to Frogs

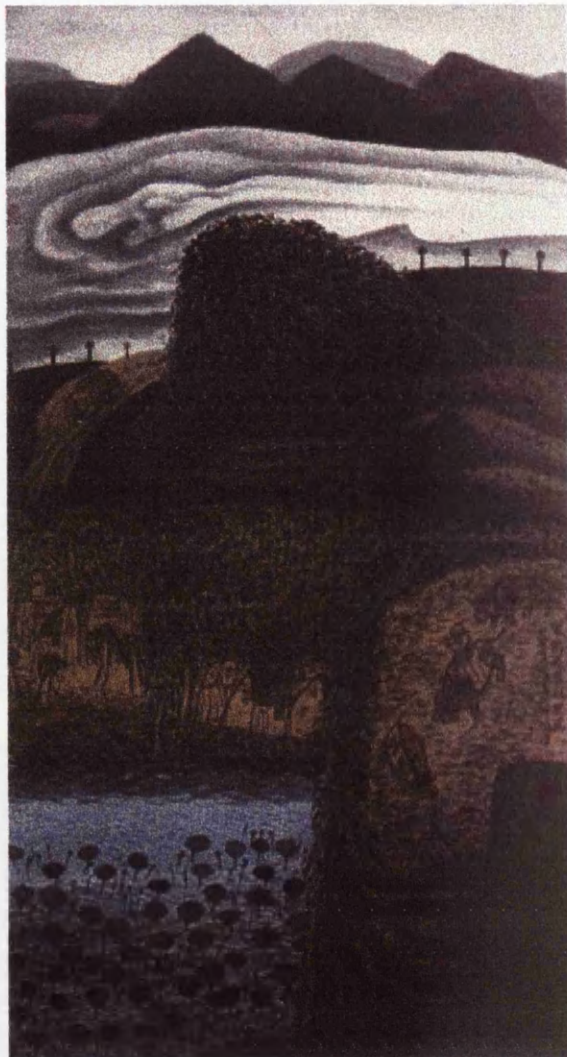




fig 7.32 photograph
1989
No U Turns Demonstration
Group

fig 7.33 photograph
1989
Sculpture of True Courage

